THE PRODUCTION AND USE OF RITUAL TERRACOTTAS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

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Formed from the very soil of India, pottery and clay sculptures are considered essential to the continuity of Hindu life. Clay is the symbol of transition, of cycles of change, of impermanence and regeneration. The creation, destruction, and re-creation of terracotta is constant. Although the potters' position within the caste hierarchy is low, his transformation of 'impure' substance into functional and sacred forms, makes him socially respected — a servant of the gods.

More potters live and work in India than in any other country or land mass of comparable size in the world. Unique as a separate, endogamous group of vessel makers and sculptors, these craftsmen still produce traditional products whose forms are virtually indistinguishable from those of their predecessors. By documenting and understanding the preparation, purpose and function of contemporary terracottas, scholars may be able to more accurately hypothesize about ancient material cultures.

This thesis is primarily based upon a survey of Indian potters in fifty-four districts within fifteen Indian states, the material collected during thirty-two months of field research over a ten-year period. After a brief comparative study of these craftsmen and their roles within contemporary society, the text focuses upon the creation of ritual terracottas and the use of these terracottas as gifts to or receptacles for the gods. Detailed attention is given to the sacred and ritual roles of potters within their communities and the ways in which their products are vital to the devotional practices of the average Hindu, as recorded in shrines and household rituals in twelve states. Finally, three separate case studies — based upon interviews with potters, their families, local villagers and priests in community clusters in South Arcot District,Tamil Nadu, Deoria and Gorakhpur Districts,Uttar Pradesh, and Puri District, Orissa — document the production and function of ritual terracottas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

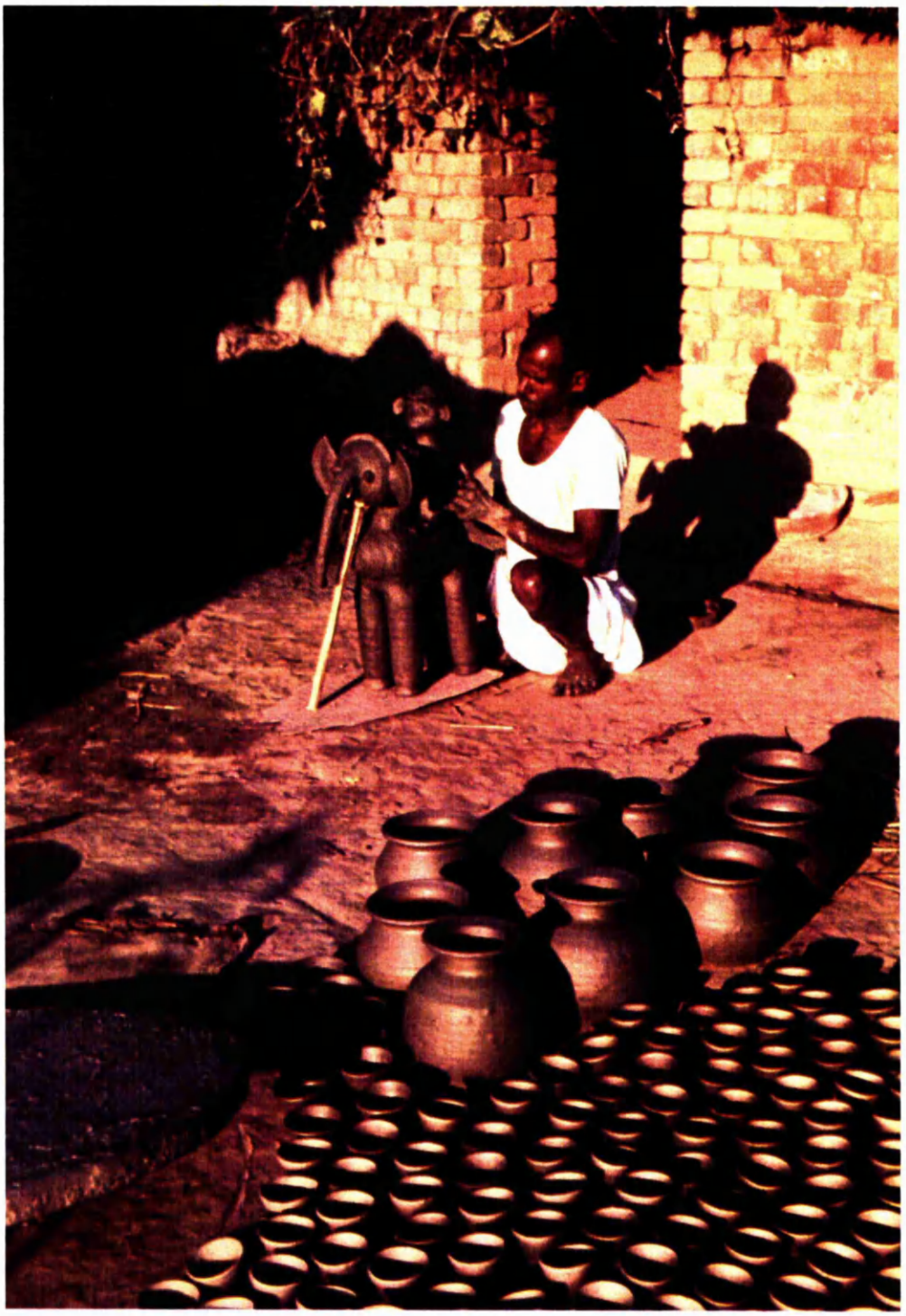

Plate 0.1) Shiv Bachhan Prajapati, a potter in Mundera, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh, whose name conveys his *jāti*'s belief that they are direct descendents of the god *Prajāpati*, sculpts a votive terracotta elephant.

INTRODUCTION

Close to one million potters live and work in India today, more than in other country or land mass of similar size in the world. Their products are integral to the mundane and sacred functioning of most Indian societies. Pottery and clay sculptures, formed from the very soil of India, are considered essential to the continuity of Hindu life. Clay is the symbol of transition, of cycles of change, of impermanence and regeneration. Its plasticity makes it simple to use; it is accessible everywhere; and its fragility ensures its constant renewal. Terracotta is defined as unglazed, fired clay. Terracotta objects, easily broken, are just as easily replaced, and in India the creation, destruction, and re-creation of terracotta is constant.

Indian potters are unique as a separate, endogamous group of vessel-makers and sculptors whose traditional products virtually monopolize the craft. The wide diversity of subcultures within South Asia, each with its own regional environment, social orders, languages and dialects, religions, customs, and products, has engendered thousands of distinct artistic terracotta styles. Pottery and clay sculpture are intrinsic to so many aspects of Indian life, both sacred and secular, that our present epoch has been referred to as 'the Ceramic Age'[1]. Many of these traditional products, and even the tools used in their manufacture, are indistinguishable in form or composition from those found in excavations of previous cultures, often from sites in close proximity to those being made and used today, suggesting that contemporary terracottas are the direct inheritance of ancient legacies. Potter caste histories and legends and early textual references further corroborate the theory of an historical continuity of terracotta traditions. By documenting

[1] Saraswati p ix.

and understanding the preparation, purpose, and function of contemporary terracottas, scholars may be able more accurately to hypothesize about ancient material cultures.

In the academic sphere, the strict boundaries between separate disciplines have eased during the past few decades enabling scholars to share pertinent research data and theories. In particular, archaeologists, art historians, sociologists, folklorists, and anthropologists have begun to recognise and explore areas of mutual interest. This meeting of disciplines, now most often classified as 'ethnoarchaeology'[2], has gained many adherents among South Asian scholars, such as: M.K. Dhavalikar, Jyotindra Jain, V.N. Misra, Farid Khan, Bridget and Raymond Allchin, Vidula Jayaswal and Kalyan Krishna, Mark Kenoyer, Gregory Possehl, Nandini Rao, L.S. Leshnik, T.C. Sharma, and Baidyanath Saraswati. The vogue for isolated academic study during the first half of this century was in part caused by a reaction to what was viewed as the 'over-romanticization' of many nineteenth century scholars who attempted to draw together material from broadly diverse fields to fit their assumptions. In 1880 George Birdwood used a model of a rural Indian potter to explain the broad complex of Indian society and its close parallels with Biblical, Roman, European, and British conditions, concluding with: "I have gone thus fully into the Indian village potter's surroundings and antecedents because it is only by a chronological and historical reduction and a right knowledge of its economical conditions that we can get at all profitably at the origin of an art. It need not be said how much an intelligent study of the influences under which the arts of India have been produced and are sustained will help to a fuller understanding of the origin and development of

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[2] Binford, Lewis R. *Nunamiut Ethnoarchaeology.* New York: Academic Press, 1978, pp. 1-14; and Otten, Charlotte M., ed. *Anthropology and Art.* Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971.

Indo-European art generally. The languages and mythologies of the Indo-European nations were never recognised to be one, until the key to their unity was found in the sacred language and religion of the Hindus, and the scientific investigation of Indian art will not fail to lead to profitable, and perhaps even surprising, results."[3] In contrast, contemporary scholarship encourages the blending of insights gained from research in complementary academic disciplines within a focused sphere, while discouraging broad assumptions. Consonant with this new approach, Baidyanath Saraswati[4] summed up the importance of an ethnoarchaeological approach to Indian terracottas: "The anthropologist's study of civilization will remain incomplete and inconclusive without gleaning through the facts of the past. Of all artifacts, pottery is one which anthropologists may study in collaboration with archaeologists."[5] The purpose of this thesis is to provide substantial new material about Indian potters, their production of terracotta, and particularly its use in religious rituals so that this information might give context for an improved comprehension of the terracottas discovered in prehistoric and historic Indian sites.[6]

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[3] Birdwood p. 320. In 1903, Sir George Watt [p 83] wrote further: " It accordingly seems possible that, were a complete series of all the pots used in carrying water, or in boiling rice, or in holding milk, etc., to be collected from each and every race of people and from all parts of the Empire, much of great interest would be learned, not only from the standpoint of the arts and industries of the country but as object lessons in historic and anthropological sciences. The shapes vary every few hundred miles, and are severely isolated according to the races of people and the traditions of the country. The primitive methods of ornamentation shown on them might also afford suggestions of great value in the study of Indian decorative art. All this has been very nearly neglected and the scholars of Europe and America may be said to have been groping in the dark, with fragments of prehistoric pottery, while the prototypes of many of the most instructive forms and designs they are dealing with, are still produced by the village potters of India and might be studied with great advantage."

[4] Saraswati p ix.

[5] Jayaswal and Krishna [p 2] further confirmed this attitude: "One logical solution of the vexed problem of interpreting ancient clay figurines can be to seek explanation from analogues of present day practices. ...Exhaustive accounts of particular living traditions in select areas ...provide reasonably stable ground for reliable interpretation of the ancient situations."

[6] In the initial stages of research for this thesis, the author documented ancient terracottas in museum and private collections throughout India in order to provide data for comparisons with the past. That material has been excluded from the present writing because its copious volume and variety diluted the focus of the contemporary material and was unjustifiably broad for the subject of a thesis.

Despite the vast number of working potters in India and the importance of their products to the maintenance of the popular notion of a well-balanced society, they have received surprisingly little academic attention. Only a few brief mentions of the craft of pottery-making existed before it was described in detail in 1880 by George C. M. Birdwood and later by Sir George Watt in 1903.[7] Anthropological accounts of the *Kumbhāras* (potters) of northwestern India were first published in 1896 by William Crooke, of southern India in 1909 by Edgar Thurston and K. Rangachari, and of the Central Provinces in 1915 by R.V. Russell and Hira Lal.[8] Between 1915 and the present, although numerous papers, chapters, and volumes have been published concerning ancient vessel and sculptural terracottas, few detailed descriptions of twentieth century potters and/or their products have been published. Regional studies of potters were published by N.K. Behura (Orissa,1978), Louise Cort (Orissa,1984 & 1988), Haku Shah (Gujarat, 1985), and Daniel Miller (Madhya Pradesh, 1985)[9], while the only cross-cultural survey of Indian potters was published by Baidyanath Saraswati in 1979, and was confined to research conducted in the north, west, and central peninsula emphasizing potters' social organization.[10] Field research focused upon potters' ritual roles and/or ritual terracottas in specific regions were

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[7] Birdwood, George C.M. *The Industrial Arts of India.* London: Chapman and Hall, 1880, pp. 301-324. Watt, Sir George.*Indian Art at Delhi, 1903.* Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing.

[8] Crooke, William. *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh.* Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing,1909. Thurston, Edgar, with the assistance of K. Rangachari. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India.*Madras: Government Press. Russell, R.V. and Rai Bahadur Hira Lal. *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India.* London: Macmillan and Co..

[9] Behura, N.K. *Peasant Potters Of Orissa: An Ethnological Study.* New Delhi: Sterling, 1978. Cort, Louise. "Temple Potters Of Puri". *RES* Vol. 7/8, Peabody Museum of Archaeology, Harvard University, Spring/Autumn, 1984. Cort, Louise. "The Role Of The Potter Of South Asia" in *Making Things In South Asia: The Role Of The Artist And Craftsman.* University of Pennsylvania: South Asia Regional Studies, 1988. Shah, Haku. *Form And Many Forms Of Mother Clay.* New Delhi: National Crafts Museum, 1985. Shah, Haku. *Living Traditions Of India: Votive Terracottas Of Gujarat.* Ahmedabad: Mapin, 1985. Miller, Daniel. *Artefacts As Categories: A Study Of Ceramic Variability In Central India.* Cambridge University Press, 1985.

[10] Saraswati, Baidyanath. *Pottery-making Cultures and Indian Civilization.* New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1979.

published by Kanti Mrinal Pal (Bengal, 1962), Stella Kramrisch (Tamil Nadu, 1968), Fischer, Fischer, & Pathy (Orissa, 1980), Stephen Inglis (Tamil Nadu, 1984, 1985, & 1986), Haku Shah (Gujarat, 1985), and Kalyan Krishna and Vidula Jayaswal (eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, 1986).[11] Prior to this thesis, no attempt has been made to survey ritual terracottas over a broad area in South Asia; and the field research herein records variations of terracottas and their ritual usages most of which previously have been undocumented.

This thesis is primarily based upon a survey of Indian potters and their products in seventy-six districts within fourteen Indian states, covering the entire peninsula of the Republic of India (except those states in the far northeast or northwest), the material collected during thirty-two months of independent field research over a ten year period.[12] The method of research required extensive travel throughout rural India on fourteen separate trips in order to discover and document shrines containing ritual terracottas. The manner of worship in these shrines was recorded, priests and devotees interviewed on tape, in notes, and on film, and the craftsmen who had created the terracottas tracked down. Although some votive clay sculptures are made by non-professional householders, most terracottas in India are made by

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[11] Pal, Mrinal Kanti. *Catalogue Of Folk Art In The Asutosh Museum.* University of Calcutta, 1962. Kramrisch, Stella. *Unknown India: Ritual Art In Tribe And Village.* Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1968. Fischer, Eberhard, Barbara Fisher and Dinanath Pathy in Eberhard Fischer, Sitakant Mahapatra, and Dinanath Pathy, eds. *Orissa: Kunst Und Kultur In Nordost-Indien.* Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 1980. Inglis, Stephen. "Possession And Pottery: Serving The Divine In A South Indian Community" in Waghorne, Joanne Punzo, and Norman Cutler, eds. *Gods Of Flesh, Gods Of Stone: The Embodiment Of The Divine In India.* Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: Anima Publications, 1985. Inglis, Stephen. " The Craft Of The Velar" published in *The National Council On Education For The Ceramic Arts Journal.* Washington, D.C., 1986, Volume 7, Number 7. Inglis, Stephen. "Making and Breaking: Craft Communities In South Asia" in *Making Things In South Asia: The Role Of The Artist And Craftsman.* University of Pennsylvania: South Asia Regional Studies, 1988. Shah, Haku. *Form And Many Forms Of Mother Clay.* New Delhi: National Crafts Museum, 1985. Shah, Haku. *Living Traditions Of India: Votive Terracottas Of Gujarat.* Ahmedabad: Mapin, 1985. Krishna, Kalyan and Vidula Jayaswal. *An Ethno-Archaeological View Of Indian Terracottas.* Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1986.

[12] A list of the potters and communities surveyed and the dates upon which those surveys were conducted is given in the Appendix.

potters. One hundred and seven potters were interviewed, their household, workshop, market, community, and religious activities observed, and, in most cases, examples of their standard secular and ritual terracottas commissioned and the production documented.

This new research data, complemented by the discoveries and opinions of the above-mentioned scholars, is drawn together into an initial comparative study of Indian potters, their societal and familial compositions, their craft techniques, and their trade relations. Potters' *jāti-varṇa* identification, common myths of origin, similar production techniques, and ritual roles draw together divergent beliefs and lifestyles. In a survey of fifteen Indian states, this thesis first establishes a broad identification of Indian potters, their placement within societies and their attitudes towards themselves. In order to better understand terracotta products, the survey includes a basic exploration of the tools and techniques of the pottery and clay sculpting craft, some of their regional variations, and the ways in which each potter's craftsmanship and inherited techniques helps create his self-identity. In traditional Hindu communities, potters interrelate with the members of other castes most frequently through *jājmānī*, the process of mutual exchange of goods and services. The increasing requirements of a monetary economy and the changes in demand for the type, style, and quantity of their products has forced most Indian potters into marketing at least some of their wares. This thesis explores the effects of these innovations upon Indian potters' self-images, and the consequent changes for some potters of status and occupation.

After establishing a broad identification of these craftsmen in the first chapter, the second chapter focuses upon the ritual roles of potters in their homes and communities, the concepts of pollution vs. purity as manifested in

terracottas, and potters' positions as transformers of mundane impure substance in sacred and ritually pure forms. Embodying as it does the continuity of life and death in India, clay is regarded as sacred. Holding within it the power to create and destroy, it is handled with respect and care. Inherently ephemeral, terracottas in India are in a constant state of change: of formation, dissolution, and regeneration. Most clay objects, whether vessel or sculpture, are produced through the interaction of three essential elements — earth, water, and fire — each of which is sacred in India, primary to the earliest recorded beliefs. The craftsman who combines those essential elements into functional forms is himself held in awe. He is an alchemist whose god-given talents transform *kaccā* into *pakkā*, which through use again becomes *kaccā*, the elements of which can again be made *pakkā* only by the potter. This thesis identifies potters' distinct positions within their communities as liaisons to the Divine, and discusses many of the ways in which potters serve as priests or essential participants in countless rituals throughout the subcontinent.

Chapter Three explores gift-giving and the reciprocal relationship between devotee and deity in India and the ways in which terracotta vessels and sculptures are used as gifts to or receptacles for the gods in temples and in community and household shrines. Earthen vessels and terracotta sculptures placed in shrines or within the delineated confines of a sacred space are believed to draw into themselves the spirits of the gods. When a god or goddess is invited to descend into a *ghaṭa* placed upon an altar, that pot is the means of communion between devotee and deity. In some rituals, the pot becomes the deity, while in others it is simply a focus for spiritual energy. Terracotta vessels containing flowers, food, water, ashes, oils, or lighted *ghī* are essential to the enactment of Hindu devotion everywhere. But the most

common forms of Indian ritual terracottas are votive sculptures — gifts to the gods. The meaning and purpose of gifts and reciprocal gift-giving in India are herein explored in detail: gifts are exchanged at every level of society, they are integral to the maintenance of a social and financial equilibrium. It is therefore only natural that a Hindu's relationship with his or her gods also is based upon a reciprocity of gifts. Although gifts may take any form, the availability, affordability, and hallowed nature of clay makes it an ideal substance for sculpting into gifts for the gods. They are most often given as part of a vow, a pledge to honour the deity with gifts in return for receiving requested boons.

Upon this basis, Chapter Four provides a comparative survey of votive terracotta sculptures given to the gods in shrines in eleven Indian states (West Bengal, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar). Examples have been selected to explore the diversity of regional expressions which are complimented by common threads of production and ritual use. Although the nature of one volume and one documentor limits its scope, the hundreds of shrines cited in this survey and the many forms and styles of images within them convey the extraordinary pervasiveness of the ritual use of terracottas in contemporary India.

The first through fourth chapters are intended as lexicons of information, a basis for understanding Indian potters, their products, their ritual roles, and the use of their products as receptacles for and gifts to the gods. Each chapter builds upon the data previously stated so that by Chapter Four the reader is familiar enough with the subject to be able to comprehend the variations and similarities of terracottas, techniques, and rituals surveyed throughout India. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven are, then, the real

focus of the thesis, detailed documentation of new field research in three specific areas: South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu; Deoria and Gorakhpur Districts, Uttar Pradesh; and Puri District, Orissa. Chapter Five focuses upon votive terracotta horses given to the local male deity *Ayyaṉār*; while Chapter Six is devoted to votive terracotta elephants given to the local female deity *Kālī-Mā*; and Chapter Seven examines devotion to the pan-Indian goddess *Tulasī* as housed in this region in sculpted terracotta shrines. Each chapter is divided into two sections: First, the deity honoured with terracottas is described, its shrines within a small area surveyed, and daily and/or seasonal rituals involving its worship outlined. The bulk of each chapter then concentrates upon a previously undocumented potter, his family life, his physical and social position within his community, his production and income sources, detailed analysis of his sculpting and firing techniques, and, finally, the manner in which his sculptures are dedicated to the prescribed deity. All the data gathered suggests common threads of production and function, punctuated by obvious regional differences, which underline Indian potters' assertions that they share a common ancestry and mythology. The conclusions of this thesis are that, although the past may not be known clearly by facts discovered in the present, contemporary terracotta production and its ritual use can indeed provide bases for educated theories regarding the production and purpose of ancient Indian terracottas.

By drawing together material gathered over broad areas, surveys limit the amount of specific detail of any one subject and, consequently, tend to overlook often pertinent individual characteristics. This thesis uses a survey approach to establish basic definitions and concepts about a subject that hitherto has been little defined, and has been considered only within limited boundaries. Although every attempt has been made to be objective and to

refrain from value judgements, the nature of field research is subjective. No matter how unintrusive the author tried to be, by being a foreigner his appearance, mannerisms, and attitudes in all likelihood affected the nature of the communities, rituals, and products he witnessed. Observations are susceptible to the unconscious attitudes of the field worker, and interviews may be distorted by the intention of the subject either to please or to deceive the interviewer. The craftsmen, priests, and villagers interviewed were chosen in part because of their willingness to cooperate with the author, a process which in itself is editorial and limiting. Furthermore, although the Indian subcontinent has been surveyed during trips to India over ten years, many occupations and rituals in South Asia are seasonal and the information gathered in any one area may not be complete. The material collated for this thesis must be seen as an inconclusive initial record which encourages further intensive corroboration.

The attitudes of educated Indians and non-Indians towards South Asian potters and their products is a primary obstruction to the collection of unbiased information. The prevalent opinion of most scholars prior to the last two decades was that the material culture of India could be divided into two categories: high and low. Archaeologists and art historians frequently stated that virtually all 'high art' had died out by the medieval period or, at latest, by the end of Mughal supremacy. Pottery and, in particular, unglazed terracotta became relegated to the bottom of the categories of 'low art'. In most surveys of Indian arts and crafts it was either not mentioned or accorded only cursory reference (ie: Coomaraswamy 1927, Kramrisch 1954, Zimmer 1955, Gray 1980, and Welch 1985). This bias was further strengthened by the British custom of ranking castes according to status, beginning with the Census of 1867, with preferential treatment given to *Brāhmans* and *Kṣatriyas*.

Kumbhāras (potters) were placed near the bottom of those ranks. Not only did and does this attitude of superiority affect the amount of material published about potters; it also constrains the information available to the field worker. Although potters perform roles integral to the maintenance of almost every Indian home and to many Hindu rituals, they are considered by many Indians to be beneath notice. This opinion is compounded by the association of potters with unclean and impure substances (see Chapters One and Two). Even though terracottas are essential to many rituals and valued traditions, many upper caste and educated Indians disregard them as 'inferior". Data is difficult to collect simply because informants have become culturally blind to terracottas and the craftsmen who produce them. The author hopes that this thesis, and the publications derived from it, will aid in opening educated minds within and without South Asia to the importance of terracottas to traditional rituals in contemporary India and their relevance to a better understanding of many aspects of Indian history.

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This thesis marks the twentieth anniversary of my travel and work in India. During that time, I have received kind and thoughtful help from countless individuals in the United States, Great Britain, Europe, and particularly in India. It would be impossible to thank them all. First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife, Helene, who has travelled with me for endless months in India, encouraging and supporting my work, and has given me a nourishing home to return to when I have had to travel alone. Beatrice Wood is responsible for first opening the doors of India to me, introducing me to her friends throughout the subcontinent, and inspiring much of my subsequent work. Through her, I met and was befriended by two great Indian women who were invaluable in my travel and research work — Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay and Rukmini Devi Arundale, both of whom were personally responsible for much of the resurgence of interest in Indian indigenous arts and crafts in the last several decades.

I am grateful to my parents, Jack and Margaret A. Huyler, for allowing me to spend a year of field research and travel alone in India when I was just twenty; to my grandmother, Margaret P. Huyler, and my uncle, Coulter D. Huyler, Jr., for their constant encouragement during my childhood of my interest in material culture; to Andrée Schlemmer, who has helped guide my work for most of my life; to my undergraduate professors Mary C. Lanius, Dr. Kate Peck Kent, and Dr. Charles Geddes for allowing me to specialize in Indian folk culture at an early age; to my graduate advisers at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, Dr. John Burton-Page and Dr. John Marr; to the late William G. Archer, who gave invaluable insight into my work; to my colleagues in London, Dr. Steven J. Cohen, Dr. Heather

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Without the extraordinary warmhearted help I have had from Indian people everywhere I have travelled, my research for this book would not have been possible. Everywhere, homes and hearts have been opened to me. I have arrived as a stranger in villages throughout the subcontinent and have been graciously invited to share a part of people's lives. Potters in hundreds of communities have allowed me to observe and photograph their work and their families, and partake of their food, while householders and priests have allowed me to witness private rituals, ceremonies, and festivals. Scholars and art collectors everywhere have given me information and insights that I would not have found otherwise. Although I would like to thank hundreds of people, I must limit myself to the following individuals and hope that those many others will understand my gratitude. Of those who have been particularly helpful, I would like to thank Diwan Sham Lal Sawhney and his late wife Teni of New Delhi; Air Marshal G.B. Singh, his wife Diljit, and daughter Komal of New Delhi; Dr. Anand Krishna and family of Varanasi; P.P.Tewari of Varanasi; Shankara Menon, Kamala Trilokekar, Padmasini, Srinivasalu,

and Peter and Sharada Hoffman of Kalakshetra, Madras; Shakuntala Ramani of Madras; Dinkerbhai Kelkar of Pune; the members of the Crafts Council, Madras; N.K. Vakani of Ahmedabad; Jerry and Genevieve Prillaman, formerly of New Delhi; Amit Pasricha of New Delhi; and K.K. Pillai and family of Hyderabad. The pioneering work of two scholars, Baidyanath Saraswati and N.K. Behura, has influenced my work greatly; and for their contributions to the field and their personal help and encouragement, I would like especially to thank my colleagues: Dr. Jyotindra Jain of the Crafts Museum, New Delhi; J. Swaminathan of Bharat Bhavan, Bhopal; Haku Shah of Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad; and Dr. Kalyan Krishna of Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi. In my research, I have had invaluable assistance from four men: Shiva Kumar of Madras; P.R. Thippeswamy of Mysore; Maheswar Mohapatra of Bhubaneshwar; and Vidhu Shekhar Chaturvedi of Varanasi. Over the years, five drivers have gone way beyond their duties and acted as assistants for me in the field: Srinivasin of Madras, G.S. Naidu of Mysore, M. Raju of Bangalore, Khalu of Bhubaneshwar, and especially Anil Kumar Sharma of New Delhi. Of the many potters with whom I have worked over the past twenty years, I would particularly like to thank the late Vaithyalinga Pathar of Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu; Ram Dhari Prajapati of Mundera, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh; and Dibakar Muduli of Balikondalo, Puri District, Orissa.

NOTE: Throughout the thesis diacritical marks have been given for all Indian words except for place names and proper names, which are written in their most common anglicized forms.

Plates are numbered according to the chapter to which they refer and appear at the end of each chapter.

Due to a computer page-numbering error, page 111 is non-existent. The numbering jumps from page 110 to 112.

CHAPTER ONE
INDIAN POTTERS: A SURVEY OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE, LIVING CONDITIONS, PRODUCTION TECHNIQUES, AND MERCHANDISING

Long ago, before my grandfather's grandfather's grandfather, before the time of the great epics like *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmayāṇa*, before even anything we know as this village and those cities and this land and that belief, at that time *Bhagwan* [*Śiva*] wanted to marry *Pārvatī*, the most beautiful goddess. But in order for their marriage to be blessed they had to be married between the *cauri [the* earthen pots that stand in the four corners around a Hindu groom and bride during their wedding]. And so *Śiva* asked *Prajāpati* (the Lord of Creativity) to make him these pots. *Prajāpati* agreed, but said he had no tools with which to make them. So *Śiva* gave his *sudarśan cakra* [sacred discus] to be the wheel, and his *triśūla* [trident] to be the turning stick, and he rubbed some of the skin from his body to make the clay, and from his head he plucked one hair which became the string that cuts the clay from the wheel, and his *pansula* [club] for beating demons became the mallet for shaping the clay. And *Pārvatī* herself gave some of her blood to decorate the pots with red. And so *Prajāpati* made the sacred *cauri* and *Śiva* and *Pārvatī* were married. So pleased were they by this creation that *Śiva* decreed that the descendants of *Prajāpati* would be the makers of earthen vessels – and by this we are called *Kumbhāra*, the makers of *kumbha* [pots].[1]

Each of the nearly one million potters working in India today[2] believes that he descends directly from the first potter created by the gods, most often referred to as *Prajāpati*[3] (Plate 1.0). From north to south, east to west, in

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[1] A translation based upon notes taken in Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh.

[2] Shah, *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay*, p 20; population confirmed by D.N. Saraf, formerly Development Commissioner For Handicrafts, Government of India. John Kea,[BBC documentary: "The Sacred Horses of Tamil Nadu", 1982] commented that over one million potters remain of the previously seven million.

[3] Other common names are *Brahma* (Madhya Pradesh), *Viśvakarmā* (Tamil Nadu, Punjab, parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar), *Rudrapāl* (Orissa), and *Dharmarāj* (Rajasthan).The creation legend usually revolves around the marriage of the gods, although gods' identities and the sacred symbols first given to become the potters' tools vary from area to area. The version above is the author's interpretation based upon his notes. In some legends, *Viṣṇu*'s *sudarśan cākra* (discus) becomes the wheel, *Śiva*'s ghotana (*bhang* pestle) the turning stick, his *laṅgoṭa* (loin cloth) the wiping cloth, his *janeu* (sacred thread) for cutting the clay off the wheel, and *Brahma*'s *adi-kurma* (the primeval tortoise) the scraper. Variations in the legend claim that the *sudarśan chākra* was *Brahma*'s, while others claim it was *Śiva*'s [Sarawati p 80]. The clay is often referred to as *Śivaliṅga* (ibid. p 86, Fischer and Shah p 119, Miller *Artefacts As Categories*, p 124), while others believe it to be composed of the skin rubbed from *Pārvatī* in her bath (Shah, *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay*, p 18). In Orissa, *Viṣṇu* gave one of his eight wheels, the *sūrasena cākra*, to be the potter's wheel, a tree from Mount *Meru* as the wheel's pivot, part of his flag to be the cloth, his mace as the mallet, and his lotus as the anvil [Cort, *The Role of the Potter in South Asia*, pp 170-171]. Behura [p 5] records an Orissan belief in *Śiva* giving his *triśūla* as the turning stick. For other examples, see: Saraswati p 32, and Shah, *Votive Terracottas of Gujarat* pp 29-30.

desert and mountain, seaside and inland plain, separated by dozens of languages and hundreds of dialects, by religious belief and social composition, each potter is linked to every other through his legend of origin. Although the story varies in detail, its essence remains the same: A potter's livelihood and his tools are both gifts from the gods. And even though the increasing influx of alternative mass-produced items has lessened the demand in recent years, the potter's role is still well defined in India. He continues to provide the vessels and sculptures that most Indians believe are necessary for maintaining healthy lives.

The production of household pottery is the principal source of a potter's income. The vessels he creates are still in common use in most Indian homes. The reasons are practical: Low cost makes this earthenware easily affordable to rich and poor alike; Indians believe that its use in cooking enhances the flavours of food; and its natural porosity keeps liquids cool through evaporation in this hot climate where electric refrigeration is generally unaffordable. This earthenware, considered pure in its newly fired state, is regarded as easily and readily polluted.[4] Much as Westerners think that 'germs' adhere to dirty tableware, Indians think that a single use contaminates the clay vessels from which they eat. For them this pollution cannot be washed off; once used, terracotta bowls, cups, and plates are discarded. In a tropical country where disease is endemic, the constant recycling of pottery used for eating is sensible (Plate 1.1). Furthermore, because clay is readily available and rapidly biodegradable, it is a suitable material for use in a household that has continuous requirements for new earthenware.

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[4] See Chapter Two, pp 100-103.

Clay vessels, made of sacred and purified earth, serve as mediums in the rituals that are so basic to every facet of life in traditional India. Every action, every decision, every change in circumstances requires a ritual to prevent ill fate and to ensure success. These rituals are based upon ancient formulae intended to intercede with or appease the gods. Terracotta vessels may become containers for offerings to the gods, or receptacles for the gods' divine presence, or repositories for negative energy drawn away from problems. As with household pottery, most ritual pottery is ephemeral: Once pots have served their specific purposes, they no longer have value and may be destroyed. Thus, demand for new ritual vessels provides potters with much of their livelihood.

Most Indian potters occasionally sculpt in clay as well. While they make simple toys to be given to children on festive occasions, their terracotta sculptures usually are associated with religious worship. Traditions governing form and purpose, handed down from one generation of potters to the next, vary from district to district in India. Clay images of gods, either fired or unfired, are made to be worshipped in the home or carried in procession during a festival. Potters also sculpt figures of people, animals, or objects that are placed in shrines as gifts to the gods. Like the vessels used in rituals, most of these clay sculptures are intended to be transitory: Once they have served their necessary functions, they are destroyed. The continual demand for replacement creates still more work for the potter.[5]

Most Indian potters are Hindu.[6] Unlike the potters in other nations, they belong to a distinct class, or *jāti* – a subgroup within the larger *varṇa*

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[5] Chapters Three through Seven deal specifically with terracotta sculptures used in religious rituals.

[6] This thesis focuses upon Hindu potters and their products, although many Muslim potters live and work in Kashmir, Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. A definite minority

(caste system). Most potters call themselves *Kumbhāra*, or a variation thereof (*Kumhār*, *Kumār*, *Kubhāra*, *Kumor*...), meaning that they are of the potters' *jāti* within the *Śūdra* (craftsmen's and cultivators') *varṇa*.[7] This position is virtually inviolable; it connotes the *Kumbhāra*'s ancestry, his social position within the community, his marital customs, many of his ritual beliefs, and his hereditary occupation.[8] Although many of the inequalities of the caste system are being addressed in contemporary India, personal identity with one's own *jāti* has changed little. *Jāti* and *varṇa* remain the foundations of Indian society; a person's *jāti* provides identity and purpose.[9]

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descended from early converts from Hinduism, they retain many of the social attitudes and customs of Hindu potters. For further reference see Saraswati, Chapter 7, pp 92-97.

[7] "The *Sanskrit* word for an earthen pitcher is *kumbha*, the prefix *ku* meaning earth. And, appropriately, the term given to a potter nearly all over India, derives from this with only regional variations. Thus *kumbhakāra* is one who makes earthen pots as is the *kumbhāra*, *kumhar*, kumar and even *kubha* [Jain and Aggarwala p 175]." Saraswati [p 46] points out that in the same Sanskritic roots apply in the Dravidian languages, so that in *Tamil* a potter is a *Kusuvan* or *Kulalam*, in *Malayalam* he is a *Kusavan* or *Kuyarun*, in *Kanarese* he is *Kumbāra* or *Kovara*, and in *Telegu*, he is a *Kummāra* or *Kumrulu*.

[8] The caste system is a means of categorization and classification according to family, function, and hierarchy. Although complex, its purpose is to simplify and codify the diverse differences within Indian society. Potters' hereditary profession of working with clay and some similar customs and attitudes draw them together under the label of *Kumbhāra*, but in reality the caste and subcaste comprise thousands of separate, unrelated communities. Baidyanath Saraswati (p xii) sums up the cohesive nature of *jāti* : "It becomes clear that the system which has been efficacious in preserving the technological traditions for over five thousand years is also potent in holding together the diverse regional pottery-making cultures." and (p 116) "What is important is not the diversity in material culture or racial composition but the self-conscious 'oneness'. This cultural self-consciousness is founded on such attributes as may be characterized within the larger category of *jāti-varṇa*."

[9] A common Indian appraisal of the interdependence and validity of *jāti* and *varṇa* is well stated by Saraswati [p 119]: "Whereas *jāti* is a socio-economic system of production, *varṇa* is a sacerdotal system of distribution of wealth and power. While *jāti* divides people into innumerable functional groups, *varṇa* unites them at the highest level of *dharma* forming the essential basis of harmony and justice in social life. However, the two systems of *jāti* and *varṇa* are functionally interdependent. The *jāti* exists as a social system of production only when it concedes the *varṇa*'s arrangements of distribution. The *varṇa* upholds a *jāti* under the spiritual ordering of roles and rank locations, so that all the heterogeous *jātis* are federated into a common belief system. But it must be borne in mind that this spiritual ordering of *varṇa* is different from the temporal ordering of hierarchy. It does not convey the sense of high and low or superior and inferior, for all the four *varṇas* are the essential organs of the spiritual body (*Purusha*), and hence equally important. If the heterogeneous *jātis* are to function as a united body, they will have to be placed necessarily under this spiritual ordering of *varṇa* so that nobody's importance can be legitimately challenged. The essential character of *jāti* is to remain culturally autonomous and yet functionally interdependent on one another, each sharing the ordered and regulated spiritual values idealized by the *varṇa*. Thus, the cultural patterning of traditional Indian society has been accomplished through the system of *jāti-varṇa*."

Every aspect of a potter's life contributes to his identification and treatment within society. He is known not only by his *jāti* name, but also by the types of pots he makes, his tools, his production techniques, and his style of decoration.[10] For example, potters who specialize in sculpting feel superior to vessel makers in one locality, while vessel makers treat brick and tile makers as inferior in another.[11] The gods he worships, the rituals he observes, his level of education, his relationships to other family members and to the community network, the architecture of his house, and even the food he eats are all governed by tradition. Many of those traditions, whether hereditary or innovative, are now undergoing changes, but all still contribute to the specific identity of the potter.

A broad network of kinship extends beyond village, town, or city boundaries. Most Indian potters are endogamous: Men always marry women from communities outside their own. A bride is chosen from a family of the same or very similar background to that of the groom.[12] In leaving the home of her parents, a potter's bride usually moves into a household where the beliefs, customs, and occupations are familiar (Plate 1.2). Polygamy is uncommon for

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[10] Many of the potters surveyed throughout the subcontinent defined their own identities by their specific tools and inherited processes of production which they believed to be superior to those of other potters in their vicinity with different equipment and processes. In most cases they claimed an obvious superiority derived from their origin legends, in which their tools and techniques were gifts from the gods, and they were unaware that the other potters also claim a similar ancestry. Corroborating observations were made by N.K.Behura [p 217] in Orissa: "It may be mentioned here that whenever a potter belonging to a particular group distinguishes another potter as belonging to some other group, he does so not merely on the basis of their subcaste nomenclatures, but also with reference to the difference that exists in their respective pottery techniques; for their exists an inextricable and positive relationship between caste groups vis-a-vis occupational peculiarities."

[11] These attitudes were expressed frequently in interviews. In just two cases: the sculptors of terracotta horses in South Arcot District,Tamil Nadu, felt that the nearby potters who made only vessels were inferior; while the potters of Nawalgarh, Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan, were contemptuous of local brick makers. See also Saraswati pp 64 & 68.

[12] In the surveys made, most brides were chosen from villages within radiuses of about thirty kilometres from the males' villages, often from villages from which other relatives had been previously chosen. In some cases, wives were brought from distances of up to five hundred kilometres, where contacts had been made through relatives working in distant factories.

most Indian potters, but in some parts of India, particularly in the west, the new bride may share her husband with one or two other wives.[13] Usually these wives are from more than one village, although sometimes two come from the same family. Whether polygamous or monogamous, every Indian wife returns regularly to visit her natal family for important occasions such as family marriages, childbirth, festivals, and deaths, and her children retain strong ties to her parents and brothers. These familial links serve as bonds of communication and awareness within the broader subcaste and regulate what might be termed as a 'caste consciousness' regarding such customs as the maintenance of traditions and the overall unity of production techniques and styles.

Within most communities, potters are respected, but they are also denigrated. Their craft influences both attitudes. Potters' lives are generally dirty: They work with mud, clay, and ashes and thus are associated with these 'unclean' substances. On the other hand, as purifiers and creators of sacred objects, they are honoured and perform special functions in many societies.[14]

Potters usually live apart from others in their community. If the community is large, they live in their own hamlet or section; in a small village,

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[13] Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 79, Behura pp 103-104. Vitoba Guniga, a potter documented in Kharwar, Karnataka (Chapter Four), had two wives. He said, "Only it is convenient. My first wife was not well and needed help. So I married also her relative and she helps my first wife with her work."

[14] Interviews with potters' neighbours in communities throughout India ascertained that potters are generally viewed with mixed emotions, as expressed in this way by a farmer in Bhisawan, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh: "These *Kumbhārs* are strange fellows. They are unclean *śūdras* working with filthy mud. How can we like them? If I am too much in contact with them I must ritually wash myself. But then also they make the pots in which my wife and daughters cook my food and the images I give to my gods. Without these images, my worship cannot be complete, and without these pots I cannot eat, and so I must respect them for their craft." Shah [*Votive Terracottas of Gujarat,* p 105] recorded a Gujarati potter saying; "When a house is constructed the potter is the first to be called. He is the first required for weddings. When a child is born, a pipe is guarded by the potter. He is need from birth to death." See also the attitude of a man in a small village in Tamil Nadu expressed in Chapter Five, pp 299-300. In contrast Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [p 189] pointed out Orissan potters are considered to be at the lowest level of *Śūdras.* They are unclean and *Brāhmans* may not accept water from them.

they live on the outskirts, most often to the west of the main settlement. This situation is practical: The potters are placed downwind so that the smoke and ashes from their kilns blow away from their neighbours; they are closer to access routes for quarrying and transporting their clay; and they have the necessary space that their craft requires.[15] Although the potters live separately, they are still integral to the administrative and cultural complex of the broader community, which is in turn part of the larger system governing state and national affairs.

As with most other traditional craftsmen in India, potters work in their homes. The walls of their houses — generally a mixture of mud, manure, and straw — are constructed by family members, while the roofs may be surfaced with tiles they have made and fired themselves.[16] Although some potters set aside a special place on which to throw, sculpt, or fire, more often each area of a potter's house is used for numerous functions. Every available space is piled with vessels in various stages of production (Plate 1.3). The potter's wheel, when not in use, stands against a wall to allow room for other necessities. At the front or side of most homes is a cleared area that, when not in use for winnowing grain, sorting vegetables, or drying pots, becomes the site of a temporary kiln.[17] Around the edges of his plot are stacks of fuel, piles of unprocessed clay, and broken potsherds saved for building kilns. Near the

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[15] Ibid p 189. Saraswati [Table 15, pp 57-58] lists the directional preferences of 147 potters' hamlets in eight states.

[16] Typically potters from central Tamil Nadu lived in mud or brick houses with flat slab-tiled roofs, coastal Karnataka in laterite-block houses with flat moulded-tiled roofs, eastern Gujarat in mud houses with wheel-thrown half-round tiles, western Rajasthan in mud houses with flat mud roofs, central Madhya Pradesh in mud houses with flat slab-tiled roofs, eastern Uttar Pradesh in brick houses with wheel-thrown half-round tiles, and West Bengal and coastal Orissa in mud houses with steeply-pitched thatched roofs.

[17] Where applicable, a permanent kiln is generally kept in a separate area to the side or behind the potter's house.

house are vegetables, fruits, and herbs planted to supplement the family's diet.

Throughout India, potting and sculpting in clay are seasonal occupations, best practiced during the spring and summer months. In warm weather, clay is easily shaped and dried and firing is more reliable.[18] The demand for a potter's products tends to be seasonal as well: New vessels and sculptures are needed at planting and harvest times, as well as at each of the important annual festivals, such as *Divālī*. Local potters supply tens of thousands of pots to the *Jagannāth* Temple in Puri each year during the week-long *Ratha Yātrā* festival.[19] The long wedding season coincides with the hot months, and when a family member is being married, each family requires a new set of earthenware.[20] During the long, wet monsoons, the potter is unable to practice his craft. The clay is too damp to retain its moulded shape; dry fuel is difficult to find and keep; and kilns are ruined if they get wet during firing. The monsoon is the season for irrigating and planting crops, and many potters spend this period farming. A potter may own land near his dwelling, or farm the land belonging to wealthier neighbours.[21] Usually he will own some livestock — most often a cow to provide milk, possibly a bullock or two to help with farming and transportation, or perhaps donkeys to carry clay from the quarry and pots to the market. (The manure from livestock is highly prized as

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[18] Jayaswal and Krishna p 68, Behura pp 46 & 225.
[19] See Cort *Temple Potters of Puri*, pp 33-43.
[20] The numbers, types, and decorations of the replacement vessels depends upon jāti, regional, and familial traditions [e.g. Miller *Artefacts As Categories*, pp 124-131, Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work*, p 121].
[21] Potters in Tamil Nadu were proud of their hereditary lands, although increasing population and poverty had drastically decreased the sizes of their farmland. In coastal Karnataka, all the potters interviewed owned the land upon which their houses and workshops stood, and some farmed their own lands, while others tenant farmed. In Andhra Pradesh, the potters were all poor tenant farmers, while in Gujarat they owned and cultivated large farms. In eastern Uttar Pradesh, they owned small farm plots, and tenant farmed larger plots during the rainy season; and in Orissa the potters owned all their own lands and were able to grow all the food their families needed.

fuel and as a temper for clay.) The potter might also raise chickens, goats, and even, in some areas, pigs – depending upon the attitudes of his local *jāti* towards vegetarianism and the propriety of certain foods.[22]

Modern Indian trends towards smaller nuclear families have had little effect upon the households of potters, who still live in large extended family units in which everyone plays a role. If the elder parents are alive, they are in charge, and they divide most of the work among their unmarried daughters, sons, daughters-in-law, and their families. Often two or three families will live together, each with its own sleeping space but sharing kitchens as well as living and working areas. Successful potters may build separate living units for each family, but these are usually adjacent, and the relatives still participate in many joint activities.[23]

Indian potters are patriarchal: Name, position, and possessions are inherited by the males. In the community, the males are dominant. The word of the eldest man is law, and the younger men living with him generally accept his decisions without dispute. Male dominance is particularly strong in the northern and western part of the country, where Muslim influence and particularly the practise of *pardā* (the veiling and segregation of women) are more common.[24] Within Indian households, however, women are often the

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[22] The types of livestock owned depends largely upon local environment and the availability of adequate fodder. Consequently potters in western Rajasthan may own camels, those of Central India and the Deccan donkeys, the Gangetic Plain water buffalo, etc.. Because of their practice of raising and eating pigs, the *Sungaria* potters of Madhya Pradesh are considered by other members of their communities to be only marginally better than Untouchables, and are shunned in most social situations [Russel and Hira Lal pp 8-13 and Saraswati pp 68 & 83].

[23] Of all 109 potters surveyed, the only exceptions to the rule of extended families were those few whose family members had been forced to leave their communities to seek employment at a distance where daily commuting was impossible. In a few cases large extended families were divided within the ancestral compound into separated dwellings and work spaces, such as that of Vaithyalinga Pathar of South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu; but the extended family was still recognized in many daily and seasonal activities. See also Behura pp 38-49.

[24] Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 78.

strongest power, determining many family and financial matters. And most rituals — the binding force of almost every action — are the vocation of women. A bride entering her new home will be subservient to all her elders, but particularly to her husband and his mother. As she bears children and shows her sense of responsibility and capability in her designated duties, she earns the respect of family members and is able to wield more influence. As she gains seniority in the family, she may well become quite powerful.[25]

Not surprisingly, the children of potters learn the craft at an early age. Raised in an environment infused with terracotta production, they know little else. From their earliest memories, their experiences revolve around pottery, its commission and production, and its trade or sale. Their home is a studio; their playthings are the clay itself and the implements of pottery making. As toddlers they receive no formal training in the craft; they simply learn by imitation. Watching their parents, older siblings, and other relatives, they learn to shape clay into forms and to paint designs on discarded potsherds (Plate 1.4).[26] As they grow older, they are assigned simple household tasks that teach them some of the basics of the trade. Usually between the ages of eight and fifteen, boys begin to use the wheel. Some potters give their sons small potting wheels on which to learn. On the first day a boy uses the wheel, his family celebrates by offering incense and confections to the spirit of the

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[25] In many of the families interviewed, particularly in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Orissa, the senior women made the decisions regarding what choices of marriage or employment their children would make. They were the family bankers and accountants, keeping scrupulous accounts of income and debts, and having the deciding vote on new purchases or investments. Outwardly in their communities, the senior men sat on *panchāyats* and appeared to control their commerce; but in most cases they consulted their wives before reaching any important decisions and weighed the advice they sought seriously. See Behura pp 49-51.

[26] The oral poetry of the *Santal*, a Bengali tribe, describes the process of learning to form clay into sculptures: "In the corner by the plantain tree, who is there? In the corner by the plantain tree is the potter. You in there, potter turn the wheel. My father and my mother make for me. I will make them, my child, make them I will. But the breath of life I cannot give — but the breath of life I cannot give [quoted in Jayakar, p 20]."

wheel.[27] If a child's parents are not talented in a particular aspect of the craft, particularly in sculpting, and the child shows a natural aptitude in that discipline, then he or she may be taught by other family members, or even apprenticed to potters outside the home in order to encourage this new talent. The females in the family, besides learning all of the household duties required of a potter's wife, are trained to clean and prepare the clay, to slip and paint the terracottas, to help with the firing, and sometimes to mould vessels and/or sculpt figures. The apprenticeship of a potter can take years, beginning with learning to throw the simplest forms, such as *dīpas* (lamps).[28] His highest ideal is to perfectly copy the vessel and sculpture prototypes of his family. With some exceptions, individual styles are not respected. Precise repetition is both the assignment and the final goal.

Responsibilities in potters' homes are divided between the sexes. The finest clay comes from riverbeds and alluvial plains and is often quarried at some distance from the house. A potter's quarry may have been mined by his family for generations, perhaps centuries. Both men and women travel at regular intervals to dig up and transport the raw clay.[29] When it has been

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[27] Jayaswal and Krishna p 65 and Saraswati p 33.

[28] Behura [pp 224-225] states:"Children assist their parents in pottery as well as in other activities. Boys assist their fathers and/or older males in the family and similarly, girls assist their mothers and/or other older ladies in the family. In this manner children receive necessary vocational and domestic training from their parents or other members of the family. Small boys usually take pottery lessons in workshops while working as page-boys to senior workers; and participating in pottery work in this manner, in course of time, they become proficient potters. ...Thus, even if a potter depends upon some other occupation for his livelihood, more often than not, he pursues pottery so as to supplement his earnings. Even some Oriya potters, it has been observed, who have taken different jobs under Government or private organizations, assist their family members in pottery work during off-hours and holidays. Some potters feel that with the village communities' constant dependence upon them for supply of utilitarian and ritual pots, they will surely be able to sustain their lives though they may not become prosperous; and hence, they strive to attain a workable experience in pottery and to inculcate the same knowledge to their children." See also Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work*, pp 117-118, Jayaswal and Krishna p 65, Inglis *Creators and Consecrators* p 30, and Miller *Artefacts As Categories*, pp 77-78.

[29] Some of the potters interviewed were reluctant or adamant about refusing to reveal the sources of their clay. They believed their sources to be sacred, and jealously guarded them against misuse or misappropriation by other potters.

brought home, the women usually clean and prepare it by removing pebbles and other impurities and mixing it with a temper of sand, ash, or, perhaps, grain chaff to give it an even texture and to counteract excessive shrinking, warping, or cracking during the drying and firing processes (Plate 1.5).[30] (Animal dung is used as a tempering agent for sculpture, tiles, and bricks, but never for vessels.)

The type of wheel and/or tools used and the way in which the final shape is attained are of primary importance in defining the *jāti* of the potter (Plate 1.6). Potters often identify themselves by these differences. Only males work on the wheel: It is considered taboo for women in most parts of India even to touch the wheel, except in specially prescribed rituals.[31] Potting wheels of several different types are used. In the far north and west, the wheel

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The quality and durability of their products is governed by the consistency of the clay. Potters in areas of poor soil, such as northern Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and western Rajasthan, complained about the rough grain of their clay and their inability to fashion vessels of high standard. In some cases the sources which their ancestors had used were depleted, and some potters (Bijapur District, Karnataka) had to import their clay from distant quarries. In contrast, potters from rich alluvial plains, such as Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, and Orissa, typically graded their clays by quality and intended product. Certain vessels and/or sculptures required specific clays mined from separate sources, and sorted at the workshop on a scale of fineness-coarseness. Behura lists seventeen varieties of clay regularly used by potters in Orissa [p 139]. See also: Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work,* 129-130, Jayaswal and Krishna p 78, Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* pp 210-214, Inglis *Creators and Consecrators* pp 193-195, and Harmalkar pp 70-71.

[30] e.g. Saraswati pp 4-5, Behura pp 142-148, Beaudry, Kenoyer, and Wright pp 57-58, and Harmalkar pp 71-73.

[31] Some of these rituals are described in Chapter Two. When women were asked about this prohibition against working on the wheel, their responses varied. A potter's wife in Tamil Nadu expressed fear of the wheel, that by touching it her child-bearing ability would be damaged. In Karnataka, a woman said that if women were to work on the wheel, the rythm of the seasons would stop — they would all be one season. In Uttar Pradesh, a woman said that she would be capable of doing anything on the wheel that her husband could do, but that she preferred to do the fine decorative details on the vessels which he could not. In Orissa, the women of a potter's village said that they could certainly touch the wheel, but that their duties were elsewhere and they had no time for learning to use it. Saraswati [p 85] noted that women cannot touch any sacred object, including the wheel, the paddle or anvil, while they are menstruating and that they are also prohibited from painting or decorating terracottas at that time. The prohibition against touching the wheel may originate from the concept of a woman's impurity because of her menstruation. Kalyan Krishna noted an exception to the standard rule in Bihar where the wife of a mentally disabled potter used a wheel to throw vessels [Jayaswal and Krishna pp 66-67]. He believes that the major reason that women do not learn to use the wheel is in order to prevent the transmittal of family craft techniques to others when they marry outside the family [ibid. p 68].

is generally a solid disk with a socket carved into the bottom to hold onto a detached pivot that rises from the floor. In eastern and central India, a spoked wheel is more common, and it is constructed either with an internal socket and detached pivot, as described above, or with an attached pivot on its underside that rests in a floor socket (Plate 1.7). Most South Indian potters use spoked wheels with attached pivots (Plate 1.8).[32] Wheels are also propelled in several different ways. While kick wheels are popular in the far northwest and wheels are turned by hand in many areas of Central India, most potters employ stick-turned wheels. This latter wheel has a small hole in the upper edge of the outer rim into which the potter inserts a long stick (Plate 1.9). The potter then stands over the wheel and rotates the stick (usually anticlockwise) faster and faster until the wheel is spinning rapidly. He then either straddles the wheel while standing to throw the pot (Plate 1.10) or squats at its edge. Although they may be carved from stone or wood, wheels usually are composed of mixtures of clay, straw, hair, and dung built upon fretworks of wood and/or cane. They must be heavy (35 to 75 kilograms or 77 to 165 pounds) and perfectly balanced to retain their momentum. A strongly turned, heavy wheel will spin for as long as ten minutes, allowing the potter to throw many vessels before the wheel again needs to be propelled. After centring his clay, the potter can create a small bowl or lamp in a few seconds or a large pot in two to three minutes.[33] In sharp contrast, a hand-turned wheel called a *sāncā* is used by the *Hatere* potters of Madhya Pradesh, Central India (Plate 1.11). The *sāncā* is simply a large terracotta plate pivoted upon a pointed stone and turned slowly with the right hand while the

[32] Detailed descriptions of the types of wheels and their distributions may be found in Saraswati pp 16-19 and Behura pp 123-127.
[33] Sinopoli and Blurton p 444, Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* pp 207 & 215, Behura pp 127-128, and Beaudry, Kenoyer, and Wright p 58.

left hand throws the pot.[34] Electric wheels are utilised in some urban areas, although they are not yet in widespread use (Plate 1.12).[35]

Although flat dishes, shallow bowls, and lamps may be finished while still on the wheel, most pots are cut from it while incomplete and beaten into their final forms. The beating process, an ancient Indian technique also practised in other parts of Asia, is used to strengthen the pot walls and to enlarge and refine its shape. This, too, is a man's job, forbidden to women in most communities.[36] The potter holds a small stone anvil against the inside of the vessel with one hand while he rhythmically beats the outside wall with a wooden mallet, stretching the clay into the desired form (Plate 1.13).[37] The loud, walloping sound of pots being beaten pervades many Indian villages. The pots that North Indian potters cut from their wheels usually have exaggeratedly thick bases that are paddled into shape. Elsewhere, most containers are thrown with thin walls that remain open at their bottoms until clay is added off the wheel and pounded into the desired shapes. Potters in southern and western India usually hold the pots in their laps while they beat them (Plate 1.14), whereas potters in other parts place the pots in containers

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[34] The *Hatere* believe their *sanca* to be the preferred method of the gods, far superior to the pivoted wheels used by other potters in their vicinity. It is remarkable to note that *Hatere* potters using *sanca* coexisted with *Caka Kumbhāras* using stick-turned wheels in the same village (Dhamna, Chhatarpur District). See also Saraswati p 6.

[35] Aside from urban potters in major cities such as Delhi, Bombay, Ahmedabad, Allahabad, Madras, etc, electric wheels were used by potters in Bhuj, Kaacch District, Gujarat; Chandpur, Alirajpur District, Madhya Pradesh; and Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

[36] Exceptions have been noted in Kaacch District, Gujarat, in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, and in Vishnupur District, West Bengal.

[37] Saraswati maintains that this technique of paddling pottery is relatively rare outside India, although this author notes its prevalence in Afghanistan and Southeast Asia. Ghosh [p 7] remarks on the apparent ancient and widespread use of this technology affirmed by the discovery of mallets among pottery tools in archaeological excavations throughout the subcontinent, except at Mohenjo Daro, which are virtually identical in shape and size to those in use today.

— often shallow bowls or baskets filled with fine sand or cloth (Plate 1.15) — and then proceed to paddle them into shape.[38]

Once taken from the wheel, the pot is first allowed to dry until it is leather-hard. Then it is beaten in several stages, which can be the most laborious part of the whole process. Small pots require only a few minutes of paddling to complete their shapes, but a large one may need as much as thirty minutes.[39] Even the direction of paddling the pot varies by region. Potters in Central and South India begin paddling at the top and work concentrically downward to close the hole at the bottom; in the north, they beat the clay in lateral motions, circling the pot. In some areas, potters use the paddling to create special indentations in the 'fabric' of the pot that give it their special trademark.[40] After paddling, the earthenware is allowed to dry slowly before firing, and it is rotated between sun and shade to keep it from cracking.

Indian vessels are also made by many non-wheel-thrown methods — most of which are employed by women. Frequently clay is applied in strips or slabs and gradually built into required shapes in a technique that is similar to, but not the same as, coiling.[41] Women use this technique to make cooking stoves and ovens, feeding troughs for animals, and every size of vessel from small lamps and dishes to huge grain storage containers as much as two-and-a-half metres (8 feet) high (Plate 1.16). Construction of these very large

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[38] Detailed descriptions of the variations of paddling techniques may be found in Saraswati pp 5-6 & 19-20, Behura pp 129-134, Inglis *Creators and Consecrators,* pp 201-202, and Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* pp 207-208 & 222-226.

[39] In western Gujarat sixteen-inch-high pots were beaten for only two or three minutes each, while a large water storage pot thirty inches high was beaten for eighteen to twenty minutes. In contrast, fifteen-inch-high water vessels in central Madhya Pradesh were subjected to twelve minutes of paddling divided between three stages. In Karnataka, sixteen-inch-high pots were beaten in two stages totalling almost twenty-five minutes each.

[40] Paddles are dextrously used by potters in Puri District, Orissa, to create vessels composed of concentric series of lotus petals for use in the great *Jagannāth* Temple. e.g. Cort *Temple Potters of Puri,* pp 38 & 42-43.

[41] In coiling, as the term is used in Western countries, a coil or rope of clay is added to the walls of the vessel in a spiral fashion, whereas in India strips are joined to form a complete circle before the next layer is added.

vessels in western India usually requires a base built upon short brick legs or upon the foundation of a large pot. To this base, strips of clay are added in circles, then worked in to gradually lengthen the container walls until the desired height is reached. Then the potter tapers the walls to form a hole with a cover at the top. Grain is extracted from one of these storage pots by pulling a plug from a hole at its base. Although these huge vessels may be fired in some regions (Plate 1.17), in most cases they remain unfired, yet they are durable enough to be used for several generations.[42]

Another common pot-making alternative involves use of a mould, sometimes by men, but most often by women. A means for creating vessels while still avoiding the prohibition against the wheel, moulding allows women to produce pottery for trade or sale and to supplement the income from their family's wheel-thrown pottery. Moulding techniques also vary across the subcontinent. In West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, clay is pressed into piece moulds; in Karnataka, it is draped over solid wooden forms or the outside of another pot (Plate 1.18); in Assam, it is pressed against the inside walls of vessels or into cavities hollowed into the ground. The vessel makers of Manipur are women (men prepare the clay and fire the kilns). These women potters start by centring lumps of clay on stationary wheels. They then revolve around the wheels themselves to shape the clay into the desired forms. Manipuri pots, highly burnished when finished, are among the most beautiful in India.[43]

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[42] The huge storage pots described are made in Gujarat and western Rajasthan [see also Shah *Form and Many Forms* , p 19]. In Uttar Pradesh, women construct vessels using a similar technique, but without bases. In Tamil Nadu, storage vessels are composed of a series of two, four, or five separate wheel-thrown rings which are joined together after firing [see also Inglis *Creators and Consecrators*, pp 336-337].

[43] See ibid. pp 40-41, Jain and Aggarwala pp 176-177 & 181-182, Jain and Swaminathan pp 114, and Shah, *Form and Many Forms*, p 69.

Different stages of terracotta production are carried out concurrently in a potter's studio. While one person is cleaning and preparing clay, and the potter is throwing on the wheel, someone else may be paddling pots or perhaps building clay stoves, and another may be making sculptures.[44] Although sculpting is the sole activity of some potters, such as those in the Kumartuli section of Calcutta[45], it is a minor part of the daily production of most potters.[46] The techniques and styles of sculpture are as varied as the many Indian cultures that produce them. Yet they can be categorised into two basic types: the primordial, whose forms are so simple and archetypal that they are virtually unchanged from one epoch to another (see Plate 4.11), and the temporal, whose forms respond to local styles and influences (see Plate 4.58).[47] Although the craft of clay sculpting in India is not governed by sexual roles, a full survey of the subcontinent reveals that most terracotta sculptures are made by men. Nevertheless, women do sculpt in many communities (Plate 1.19).[48] The simplest sculptures are solid, composed of dowels and pinches of

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[44] See Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work,* p 117. A potter who does not have enough family members to help him may hire labourers or ask other potters to help him to fill a specific commission [Behura p 45].

[45] Bean p 31

[46] Jayaswal and Krishna [p 58] noted in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh that the ration between potters and those that specialize only in sculpting is 30:1. They also documented [p 61] that in in centres with a constant demand for both vessels and sculptures, only those potters with a particular aptitude for sculpting are concerned with that function. Although they recorded a few instances of working potters whose families of origin (and *jātis*) were not potters, those craftsmen were never employed in sculpting ritual terracottas [p 64]. Saraswati [p 32] maintains that potters are generally divided into two specialty groups: most are vessel-makers only and that the majority of image makers are specialists in the field, not employed in making vessels. Based upon the field research conducted for this thesis, and corroborated by most of the other research by other scholars in ritual terracottas, Saraswati's conclusion is erroneous. Although they are many potters who specialize only in the production of vessels, most sculptors in clay are not specialists, but rather vessel-makers who occasionally or seasonally sculpt on commission.

[47] Stella Kramrisch in 1939 ("Indian Terracottas" p 89) was the first art historian to draw attention to these two diverse types of terracotta sculptures. "The principle involved is that of ageless types and timed variations. The timeless types persist, essentially changeless; the timed variations result from the impresses which the passing moment leaves on them. The two types occur side by side on the various levels of excavations. Today also the two types continue to be made, the one as 'primitive' as ever, the other with all the attributes of style and local adaptations."

[48] Women were documented sculpting in Jaisalmer District and Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan, Gwalior District and Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, Allahabad District

clay joined together. Unless they are intended to remain unfired, these solid figures must be small, or they will break in the kiln.[49] Larger sculptures are hollow. Slabs of clay are rolled into tubes and joined by strips to make the trunks and legs of some forms (See Plate 5.8),[50] while elements thrown on wheels comprise the primary parts of other sculptures (see Plate 6.12).[51] In both cases, mallets and anvils may be used to refine and strengthen the sculpture. Still other sculptures are assembled from clay pressed into moulds (Plate 1.20).[52] Many are combinations of these techniques: They might have hand-sculpted bodies with moulded faces[53] (Plates 1.21. 1.22, & 1.23) or wheel-thrown cores decorated by hand (see Plate 4.50).[54] They vary in size and complexity from small balls of clay the size of peas (representing injured testicles or internal organs)[55] to elaborate horses and elephants five metres (16 feet) high (see Plate 5.46).[56]

The decoration of vessels and sculptures generally is the speciality of women. The male potter may add incised, pressed, or paddled designs to the fabric of the clay during the throwing, beating, or sculpting process, but the women in his household will slip, paint, polish, or burnish it.[57] Many utilitarian pots remain undecorated — their simple function does not require

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and Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh, Patna District, Bihar, Bankura District, West Bengal, and South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

[49] These are the 'timeless' terracottas referred to by Kramrisch (footnote 38). They are found in almost every district in India, and have been documented for this thesis in sixty-one districts in twelve states.

[50] Tamil Nadu, Karnataka , and Rajasthan.

[51] Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Orissa.

[52] Moulded terracotta sculptures are mass-produced by potters in every state, usually to meet the demands of seasonal festivals.

[53] Surat District, Gujarat, Allahabad District, Uttar Pradesh, and South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

[54] Central Karnataka, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and Orissa.

[55] See Shah *Votive Terracottas of Gujarat*, pp 124-133.

[56] Huge terracotta horses are found in shrines throughout Tamil Nadu. See Chapter Five, p 298.

[57] Saraswati p 29.

adornment — but vessels and sculptures used in rituals are often enhanced with applied colour, design, and texture. The knowledge of this decorative skill is passed from generation to generation within each household, and a bride entering a new family must learn and adopt the styles used in her new home. Her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law are the instructors for this process, which generally takes several months. If she has a good hand, she takes pride in her talent; if she proves inartistic by the family's standards, she will be assigned such undemanding tasks as slipping and burnishing.[58] Mining sources for the mineral compounds used in slipping and painting pots tend to be closely guarded family secrets that are passed down for generations; many potters express fear that their secrets will pass out of the family when married daughters move away.[59] Other colouring compounds may come from itinerant vendors who trade over long distances.[60] Whether added before or after firing[61], slips are intended to reduce the porosity of the clay in order to improve its strength and its retention of liquids. They are generally red or yellow in tone (caused by hematites or red or yellow ochres) (Plate 1.24), although a popular slip in northwestern India, particularly in Punjab,

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[58] Daniel Miller [*Artefacts As Categories,* pp 94-120] documented in detail the means of transmission of vessel painting styles in one small village in Madhya Pradesh. He discovered that although women claimed to be painting in the manner and design of their natal villages, in fact they rapidly adopted the styles of their new home, making their products virtually indistinguishable from those of women raised in that village, particularly those of the precise workshop into which they moved. The process of basic painting apprenticeship in the new home took six months to one year, although the ability to paint well was entirely individual, and some 'untalented' women were given only simple decorating tasks. Saraswati [pp 23-24], in his survey of northern, central, and eastern India, made a simplified list of some of the common patterns in use in those areas

[59] Potters throughout India were reluctant to divulge their colouring compounds for fear, they said, that the information would be published or widely disseminated and cause too much competition from other potters. In several cases they gave information which, when researched to its alleged source, was found to be incorrect. Lists of the minerals and compounds used in slips and paints in India may be found in Pal "Crafts and Craftsmen..." pp 176-177, Behura p 189, Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work,* pp 130-131, Jayaswal and Krishna pp 50, 57, & 80, Saraswati pp 7, and Watt pp 85-87.

[60] In some cases potters buy their painting materials from travelling salesmen who carry in stock those items regularly required by rural villagers. Otherwise, potters may visit fixed suppliers in nearby towns or cities, or dye merchants in weekly markets.

[61] Watt pp 83-84.

employs ground mica to make it glisten. Pots in eastern and southern India are rarely painted before firing;[62] the designs, added afterwards with water-based paints, are intended to be ephemeral. The designs enhance the appearance of the vessel during a ritual such as a wedding ceremony or a festival offering and then quickly wear off with use (Plate 1.25). Potters who paint their vessels before firing are limited to Gujarat, Rajasthan, western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, and Himachal Pradesh. Usually painted by women with clay and mineral slips before firing, the resulting designs are permanent, intended to decorate the home and ritual for the life of the object. Unless a plain slip intended to prolong the life of the object is used, as with terracottas in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa, and Karnataka, all terracotta sculptures, except those produced in Gujarat (Plate 1.26), are painted after firing. Whether applied before or after firing, simple colours (white, red, yellow, and black) are used to paint designs on most pots and sculptures, although some women substitute bright and sometimes even gaudy commercial paints.[63] A wide variety of motifs and patterns exists, but the women of each family have their own trademarks (Plate 1.27).[64] Rather than painting the vessels, they may use smooth pebbles or beads to burnish and polish the surfaces of slipped vessels — a more time-consuming process, but one with elegant results (Plate 1.28).[65] The women artists are always

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[62] e.g. Jayakar p 20.

[63] Modern terracotta wedding vessels in Tamil Nadu are frequently painted in traditional designs with brilliant oil-based paints. In Puri District, Orissa, contemporary artists paint vessels with elaborate depictions of *Jagannāth* and other Vaiṣnavite deities in a style derived from local paintings on wood and cloth. To cater to local English and Indian tastes in the late nineteenth century, the Kumbharas of Kumartuli in Calcutta began to paint low-fire plates and pots with bright religious and decorative designs reminiscent of Company School paintings. This decorative ware is still popular today.

[64] For a detailed analysis of the decorations applied to vessels in one village in Malwa, Madhya Pradesh, see Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* pp 84-120. For examples in South India, see Archana pp 69-70.

[65] The highest quality of burnished terracottas was found in Saurashtra, Gujarat, Seoni District, Madhya Pradesh, and Manipur. A vessel eighteen inches high might require as much as thirty hours of burnishing with a large seedpod to attain the desired finish.

aware of which pot or sculpture was decorated by whom, but the finished product is attributed only to the male potter. In the larger community, women rarely are given credit for the quality of their artistry.[66]

Glazes are not indigenous to India, having been introduced by Muslim invaders in the eleventh century and later by the British.[67] Until recently, they failed to gain popularity among orthodox Hindus for three reasons: First and foremost, the traditional prejudice prevailed against the use of any 'polluted' clay vessel more than once;[68] second, china clay is not common in India, and red clay, the most prevalent, does not hold a glaze; and third, the process of glazing requires high-temperature kilns, which are unaffordable for most Indian potters. With modern consumerism and the weakening of orthodox attitudes in the latter decades of the twentieth century, mass-produced glazeware (in part using imported china clay) has become increasingly popular, particularly in urban areas, threatening the livelihood of many traditional potters.[69]

Architectural elements, such as tiles and/or bricks, also are produced by many potters. Along the western coast of South India, especially in Goa and Mangalore, tile making is a large commercial industry. For centuries the

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[66] "While it may be important to villagers that a product can be associated with a particular male, it may be a matter of no consequence as to whether the part that is contributed by the female is associated with any particular female: the pot is still known as the potter's and not the painter's, product [Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 110]."

[67] It is interesting to note that although India has exported her craftware both to the Far East and the West for millenia, almost no instances of the export of terracotta objects have ever been recorded, with the exception of a nineteenth century fashion for small life-like terracotta images of Indian ethnic types (mahārājas, zamīndārs, priests, gurus, soldiers, dancers, craftsmen, servants, etc.) which were exported primarily to Britain. The obvious reason for this historical lack of exportation of terracottas is its low-fire, unglazed nature and its extreme fragility.

[68] See Chapter Two, pp 100-103.

[69] Pronounced British preference for glazed pottery and tiles strongly influenced early documentation of the Indian potters' art, so that those few books devoted to Indian craftsmanship prior to Indian independence paid little attention to the much more diverse field of unglazed terracottas. Sir George Watt's *Indian Art At Delhi 1903,* pp 87-94 is still one of the finest sources of documentation of Indian glazed wares.

local potters have made tiles for the roofs and floors of traditional South Indian houses, particularly those of the affluent.[70] In recent years, factories have developed from cottage industries to satisfy the demand for tiles in contemporary houses and apartments throughout India. Although tiles are now made in assembly lines, the process has changed little: Clay is pressed into tile moulds, allowed to dry, and then fired.[71] In indigenous architecture elsewhere in India, roof tiles are more common than floor tiles. Created in a variety of ways, they are made as part of many potters' regular merchandise. Most are constructed of simple slabs of clay,[72] while others are made by throwing cylinders on the wheel and cutting them in half to produce two hemispherical tiles.[73] They are then fired along with the potter's other wares (Plate 1.29). Bricks may be made either by potters or other local craftsmen. Although some are simply cut from the soil, most are pressed into moulds and allowed to dry thoroughly. The unfired bricks are then stacked together to form large structures that are interspaced with fuel and lighted to become the kilns (Plates 1.30 & 1.31).[74] They remain piled this way until houseowners or masons need them for building.

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[70] To withstand the heavy rainfall along the western coast, many houses have double-tiled roofs. The moulded exterior tiles are flat, curved, or corrugated, while directly below them a second layer of flat tiles impressed with decorative designs comprises the ceiling.

[71] The large gas-fired kilns produce durable tiles suitable as a construction medium with a variety of applications and of a fine enough quality to meet export standards, although as yet no foreign markets have been sought.

[72] For example, those of Bhilsa District and Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, and Bankura District, West Bengal.

[73] For example, those of Baroda District, Gujarat, Gorakhpur District and Varanasi District, Uttar Pradesh, and Darbhanga District, Bihar.

[74] In eastern and southern India brick kilns are usually composed of rectangular 'houses' of unfired bricks, each containing an inner cubical space filled with fuel and fed by a series of foundation stoke holes and flues. In western India unfired bricks are placed in a circle around a central core of fuel and built up into a cone, interspersed with staged rings of fuel. In Bengal the traditional brickmakers are *Sutradhārs* (carpenter caste) who historically constructed fabulous temples of bricks moulded in intricate bas-relief designs. Today lack of sufficient patronage to produce brick temples has forced those *Sutradhārs* who continue the profession to resort to the manufacture of simple house bricks. [Skelton and Francis p 58 and Santra pp 53-55] Referring to the sacred nature of bricks, the *Taittirīya Saṁhita* IV.2.9.4. [Kramrisch *The Hindu Temple*, p 105] affirms: "To Thee, O Goddess, O Brick, let us sacrifice with oblation", while the *Śathapatha Brāhmaṇa* VI.1.2.22.f states: "In the fire

The whole family is involved in the firing process: Everyone is kept busy preparing the kiln, which in most cases is fired every ten to twenty days.[75] Shortage of fuel is a major problem almost everywhere in India, and the search for flammable materials is a continuous occupation. Overpopulation and severe deforestation have made wood a scarce commodity, and for the past century, potters have had to intensify their reliance on alternative fuels. Almost anything that will burn is used to fire a kiln: sticks, roots, bark, leaves, reeds, coconut husks and fibre, straw, chaff, and animal dung. Dung is the most dependable fuel, and even though donkey, camel, or even elephant manure may be used in areas where those animals live, cow or buffalo dung is preferred.[76] To prepare it for burning, it is mixed with chopped straw or chaff, formed into a cake or log, and sun-dried. One of the regular chores for potter children is to search their community for manure and to bring it home. Since cow and buffalo dung are also the fuel of choice for cooking in most households, this search is not easy.

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the gods bathed him [*Prajāpatī*] by means of oblations; and whatever oblation they offered, that became a baked brick and passed into him, and because they were produced from the offering [*iṣṭa*], therefore they are bricks [*iṣṭakā*]; and hence they make the bricks by means of the fire, for it is oblations they thus make" [ibid p 104].

[75] This figure is taken from an average of all the potters surveyed. A great variation exists in the frequency of firing due to many factors: seasonal weather prohibitions, ritual dictates, demand for products, numbers of working craftsmen, quantity and quality of fuel, and the type of kiln employed. Commercial potters with a constant demand for their products, such as those of Panchmura, Bankura District, West Bengal, may fire as often as once each week, while potters that have been forced to supplement their incomes with occupations, such as the potters of Gogadev, Jaisalmer District, Rajasthan, might only fire once every six weeks. According to Daniel Miller's case study in Dangwara, Malwa, Madhya Pradesh [*Artefacts As Categories*, p 228], "The regularity of the firing depends upon the season. Usually, potters fire about every ten days, but before the festival of *Divālī* and *Akhartij* there is a crescendo of activity, leading to firing every two days."

[76] Sinopoli and Blurton [p 443 & 452] note that in Kamalapura, Belary District, Karnataka, extreme shortage of wood, the traditionally preferred fuel source, has forced potters into using field refuse for kiln fuel: detritus made from sugarcane stalks or dried lentil plants, combined with coconut husks and cowdung. They also point out that less fuel is needed to fire thin-walled vessels, and that the greater heat conducivity of these pots used in cooking results in fuel savings for the householder as well. In western Gujarat even cowdung is too treasured to use for firing, and potters consider cactus wood the best alternative [Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work*, p 126]

The methods of firing are as varied as those of pot construction. Permanent kilns and ovens are not as common as temporary kilns, for they require much more fuel, particularly wood.[77] Their advantages are higher levels of heat and greater control over the outcome, resulting in more durable products. These kilns may be built of stone, bricks, or mud, and their shapes vary according to provenance. Potters in Bareilly District, Haryana, build kilns to resemble large inverted cones (Plate 1.32); in Baroda District, eastern Gujarat, permanent circular walls are surmounted by temporary roofs (Plate 1.33); in Puri District, Orissa, large domed structures are housed within sheds (Plate 1.34) (in a few villages in Southern Puri District, these domes are built of stacked pre-fired pots, [Plate 1.35]); while in Bastar District, Madhya Pradesh[78], potters often recycle the exterior walls of abandoned houses as the foundation walls for kilns. Vessels to be fired in permanent kilns are placed upon broken potsherds or small mud bases to allow for proper ventilation. Fuel is arranged around them gently before the kiln is closed, and, depending upon the kiln type, flues and stoke holes may be dug to feed the flame and regulate the temperature.[79]

Most of the kilns used by potters are temporary, constructed in flat, open spaces or in small pits near the potters' homes. The procedure for building an open kiln is simple (Plate 1.36), but the outcome is more risky than with a permanent kiln. Although the preparation of the kiln is closely directed by the chief male potter, it requires family cooperation.[80] A space or

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[77] Few of the potters surveyed employ permanent kilns. The process of firing in a permanent kiln is described in detail in Chapter Seven, pp 433-435.
[78] Beaudry, Kenoyer, and Wright p 59.
[79] Detailed descriptions of firing in permanent ovens and kilns may be found in Saraswati pp 11-12, Behura pp 198-203, and Sinopoli and Blurton pp 447-450.
[80] The processes of building and firing temporary kilns in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are recorded in Chapters Five and Six respectively. For a corroborative study see Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work,* pp 143-144, 149-152 & 158.

pit is cleared of all extraneous matter, then layered with slow-burning fuel – usually dung cakes and possibly coconut husks or sticks placed in a solid circle. Once the fuel is completely dry and heated by the sun, unfired vessels are placed upside-down in a ring, sometimes resting upon broken sherds from previous firings. If there are sculptures to be fired, they will be placed in the centre. Next, more vessels are gingerly stacked upside-down atop the first pots and/or sculptures until the pile forms a fragile dome. The spaces between unfired clay items are carefully filled with more fuel (manure, sticks, husks, chaff, and leaves) until the whole dome is surfaced with it. Then comes a layer of straw, topped by a thin surface of fine clay to complete the construction. For ventilation, a hole is left at top centre and a space is left around the circumference of the base. The kiln is then lighted and allowed to burn for one to six hours, reaching temperatures of 400-800°C before the fuel is exhausted and it begins to cool (Plate 1.37).[81]

The colour of the finished product can be governed by controlling the amount of oxygen that reaches the flame. The results of a normal firing are red, yellowish, or slightly grey pottery, depending upon the clay and slips used. In reduction firing, which may be done in any kiln, fixed or temporary, all sources of ventilation are covered at some point during the process, trapping the smoke and carbonizing the surface of the clay. The fired terracotta has a black finish, its density proportionate to the success and duration of the reduction.[82] Black pottery, often highly burnished after firing, is prized in many households (Plate 1.38), and black votive sculptures, such as those

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[81] Temperatures estimated by Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 231 and Saraswati p 10. Potters in some areas (e.g. Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh, Sambalpur District, Orissa) build fire channels into their kilns, which allow for the addition of fuels and the regulation of heat, resulting in increased firing times from twelve hours up to ten days.

[82] Reduction firing may be more carefully regulated in a permanent kiln — a process which has been documented Orissa in Chapter Seven pp 433-435. A description of reduction firing in an open kiln in Malwa, Madhya Pradesh is given in Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 231.

made in Panchmura, Bankura District, West Bengal, and Puri District, Orissa, are preferred by some to red or painted ones. The colour of pottery, whether natural or black, connotes its use. Red or plain pottery is used for carrying and storing water and for ritual purposes, while black vessels are preferred for the storage and preparation of food in the household.[83]

When finished, the terracotta is bartered or sold to provide income for the potter and his family. Although many Indian potters are poor, broad-based surveys of their incomes reveal that their earnings are higher than the national average.[84] The cities are monetary environments and potters are paid in cash, but elsewhere, most vessels are still exchanged through *jajmānī*, an inherited mutual transaction between two families or individuals in which the services or products of one are traded for those of the other.[85] It is a barter system that has existed throughout Indian history. Although the term

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[83] "The distinction between red-painted and black pottery is equally pronounced in their differential use. Red-painted pottery is essentially used for the carrying and storage of water. ...Water-carrying is the task of these pots in relation to human beings and daily tasks, but, for the deities, this pottery is suitable for the presentation of food. It is common in Hindu practice for the action appropriate to humans to be stepped up by one 'stage' in purity when applied to deities. ...An example is found in *prasād*; food is first presented to the deities and then distributed to people. The food, having been offered to the deity, is regarded as the leftovers' of the meal, and ritually polluting in relation to the deity, but it is now acceptable food for human consumption. ...In contrast, in the field of human relations, it is the black pottery that is deemed fit for the preparation, storage and presentation of food in daily circumstances. Ordinary food is considered by villagers to be one stage less pure than water and this further marks the distinction between the two classes of red-painted and black pottery in terms of ritual purity [ibid. p 146]."

[84] Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 81. This estimate is based upon average incomes noted in surveys taken throughout India. A good cross-cultural comparison of average monthly incomes in two states, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, may be found in Jayaswal and Krishna pp 69-70.

[85] "A the village level the network of relationship of a potter with the village community, of which he is a constituent part, is diverse and complex. The village community, which is usually heterogeneous and hierarchically graded in its composition, is well integrated and has a coherent life based on ascriptive social order. ...The first network of relationship of a potter is within the village community, in which all the families of the village belonging to various caste groups are represented. The second network of relationship is at the individual family level and it links up a potter to the various touchable castes in the village. And the third network of relationship is based upon the traditional *jajmānī* system or economic pluralism of the Indian caste system. This network too stretches across the social contour of the village and links up a medley of castes in one's own and the neighbouring villages to the potter. This is a two-way process; the potter serves almost all the caste groups, and the vocational and ritual service castes, whose services the potter also needs, also serve him in turn." Behura pp 24-25

jajmānī is used to describe economic interrelations among many groups of people, the *jajmān*, from whom the name derives, is literally the major landowner in a community.[86] Landless potters may inherit the right to farm a portion of his land in return for supplying him with an agreed-upon number of vessels. Potters who own land receive fixed portions of grain or other desired commodities.[87] Services are exchanged in this way at every level of traditional society.[88] The village potter provides earthenware to carpenters, stonemasons, weavers, barbers, launderers, and even priests in return for their services.[89] Those who do not provide a service are expected to pay in grain or foodstuffs.[90] Until the recent advent of widespread advertising through radio, television, films, and publications, and the subsequent growth of a commodity market, money was rarely used on a daily basis in rural India.

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[86] Deeper explorations of the concept of *jajmānī* may be found in Maloney pp 230-232, and in Inglis *Creators and Consecrators,* pp 140-144.

[87] In the surveys most potters owned their own land, although many also supplemented the produce from their land by tenant farming. (See also Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 80).

[88] Behura pp 227-238. Miller [*Artefacts As Categories,* p 131] in his case study in Malwa, Madhya Pradesh, documented that most earthenware was provided during the two annual festivals of *Divālī* and *Akhartij,* at which time all reciprocal payments and non-continual services were given.

[89] In this way a stone mason will provide the required anvils, pivots, and the stone used in wheels, and that for household use, in return for the earthenware his family needs, a weaver will provide the potter family's annual requirements for cloth, while a barber will agree to shave weekly the family's male members. [For a detailed list of the *jajmānī* agreements between potters and different service castes in Orissa, see Behura pp 232-234.] "A caste renders a kind of service to another mainly on the consideration of its own economic necessities; and the receiving caste receives that service for its ritual and/or economic necessities. For instance, a Brahman priest serves a potter mainly on economic consideration; whereas, on the other hand, the latter receives the services of the former for his own ritual necessities. ...A potter, as the occupational specialist of earthenwares, manufactures various kinds of pots, such as cooking-pots, storing-vessels, ritual and ceremonial pots etc., to meet the diverse needs of the village community. He manufactures the earthenwares mainly out of his own economic consideration, for he earns his livelihood through it. Whereas, all other caste groups, who depend on his products, need them for both economic and ritual purposes, the latter perhaps more important. Even the persons who have given up the use of earthenwares for cooking and storing purposes still continue to depend upon potters for the supply of ritual pots." [ibid pp 30-31]. See also Lannoy p 158.

[90] *Jajmānī* is only effective when the medium of exchange is available. Although individual relationships may encourage a potter to provide his products to an impoverished family in extenuating circumstances, in general if the traditional service or commodity is not available for exchange, then the terracottas must be paid for in cash. See Saraswati p 37

Even though cash transactions are increasingly important to an average potter's livelihood, *jajmānī* remains the foundation of most of his income.[91]

The terms of exchange in *jajmānī* are renegotiated with each generation. When the family expands and splits, the clientele is divided among the sons.[92] In return for a sufficient supply of grain or rent-free land, a potter may agree to provide a continuous supply of any of his products that a landowner needs.[93] He might, however, contract to deliver vessels only once a year to another craftsman, such as a carpenter, from whom his requirements are limited. Within the *jajmānī* system, the amount to be paid usually is dependent upon the wealth of the client. A farmer with an average income may exchange the use of a small plot of land for the vessels he needs, while a prosperous landowner will be expected to provide more land even if he requires less earthenware.[94] The Indian caste system is infamous around the world for the restrictions it places upon interrelations among certain groups of people, but potters are able to work outside this system in their transactions.

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[91] *Jajmānī* is essentially a rural phenomena, inapplicable to urban transactions. Potters who live in large towns and cities must live entirely within a monetary economy, and demand all payments for their products, whether utilitarian or ritual, in cash.

[92] For example, when Vaithyalinga Pathar of Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, was married, he and his elder brother split their ancestral home in two by building a brick dividing wall down the large central room. Although the two potters' workshops were side by side, and they sometimes shared work on large projects, their father's clientele were divided equally between them and their families, and new bases of *jajmānī* exchange decided with each client. Similarly, Dibakar Muduli of Balikondalo, Puri District, Orissa, also divided all the family's hereditary clientele with his brother at the time of his marriage. [See also Saraswati pp 36-37.] Behura [p 46] believes that overpopulation and the consequent increasing demand for land has encouraged a greater reliance upon the joint family system among potters, enabling them to share both physical and economic resources.

[93] Miller [*Artefacts As Categories,* p 90] notes that each potter in the village he surveyed in Madhya Pradesh had an average of 53 steady client families, while Bose showed an average of 51 steady client families per potter in villages near Surat, Gujarat.

[94] "Under the *yajmānī* system, there are two modes of payment: one is by fixing the amount of grain to be paid periodically during the harvest, and another is the award of rent-free land. The latter arrangement is generally made with the *zamīndārs* who would give a plot of land without transferring their proprietary right. A potter has, therefore, no right of alienation over the land granted to him, but he can take the full produce thereof. The acreage of land varies from place to place, and also from family to family. A big *zamīndār* may give one acre of land, while a middle-class peasant may give only 0.25 acre, although the potter may have to supply a greater quantity of pottery articles to the latter. It should thus be borne in mind that the arrangement is not purely commercial (Saraswati p 37)."

They provide their goods to every family in the community, regardless of that family's occupation or relative 'pollution'. Purified by fire, pottery can be used by anyone. By working with sacred fire, the potter is himself purified regularly and may accept payment in kind from 'polluted' sources.[95] In every arrangement, either party reserves the right to cancel if the terms of the agreement are not met. Consequently, a potter may lose his clientele if the quality or quantity of his wares is below standard.

Terracottas used in rituals, whether sculptures or vessels, might not be included in *jajmānī* transactions. They may be specially commissioned as needed and paid for in cash or with a negotiated sum of other trade goods.[96] Ritual items are rarely sold in markets, although a potter may, while producing an order, make extra pieces that he will store in his house for later trade or sale.[97] Each *jāti* within a settlement can have its own requirements for special shapes or decorations.[98] Accordingly, the majority of a potter's time

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[95] "The potter as the manufacturer of earthenwares, serves all the groups (those within the caste system and those outside it too) in the village community. He also serves the peripheral castes, for that does not pollute him in any manner. All the functionary castes serve him in turn [Behera p 30]." For clarification on the pollution/purification aspect of potters, see Chapter Two, pp 100-103.

[96] Jayaswal and Krishna [p 70] commented: "Produced on specific demand of the regular customer, in most of the cases, the ritual terracotta objects are supplied as part of the *jajmānī* system, both in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The potter's family may receive some conventional items such as a *dhotī* or *sārī* along with cereals and occasionally a little money at the time of supplying of these articles. The *jajmāna* bi-annually or periodically gives a part of the agricultural products to one of the potter's family, which in return supplies required earthen objects. ...Side by side the *jajmānī* system for the dispersal of the animal figurines, a regular marketing system is also in vogue at some places. The margin between the purchased good by the middle man and the customer is about 1:3 in the latter case. For, usually a ritualistic elephant which is sold to the customer at Rs. 20, is purchased form the craftsman by the middle man at Rs 6 or 7 only. When sold to the middle man or even the customer in regular currency, the cost of one set or composition may vary from Rs. 4 to 30." Jayaswal and Krishna [pp 7-12] listed by type and quantity the individual terracotta production of 1742 potters working in 134 centres in these two states and [pp 13-18] the annual incomes derived from the categorized sales of all terracotta articles.

[97] For this thesis research, the general modus operandi was first to survey the shrines of a given area in search of votive terracottas, then to identify and track down the potters who had made them. One of the initial means of verifying a potter's identity was by viewing his products stored in his house/workshop. Almost every potter had examples of his work in store; if not, then he was requested to help locate his products in other locations in his community or commissioned to produce new samples.

[98] In each community, the individual rituals within each *jāti* require specific and specialized vessels and sculptures, so that the repertoire of a potter is varied according to the demands

is spent filling specific orders for a steady clientele. He supplements this production with secular vessels that a family member — frequently his wife, sister, or daughter — may take and sell in a weekly market (Plates 1.39 & 1.40). The potter may also sell to a middleman, who will then transport the wares to larger towns or cities where they are resold in daily markets (Plate 1.41).[99] Terracotta toys and votive images sculpted annually for such festivals as *Divālī* and *Gaṇeśpūjā* are frequently sold in special fairs and markets (Plate 1.42).[100] All of these cash sales enable the family to buy the commodities that are unavailable through *jajmānī* exchange. Eighty-one percent of India's population still lives in villages[101], where the *jajmānī* system remains effective, although massive land reform and re-education in some areas, such as the state of Gujarat, have caused *jajmānī* to be replaced with a monetary system. In the burgeoning Indian cities, *jajmānī* is largely

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of his clientele. Hence the shape of a vessel may identify not only its use, but also the family for who it is made. [Cort *The Role of the Potter in South Asia*, p 169]. Lists of some of the variations of vessels made within specific communities are given in Behera pp 213-216 & 235-237, Inglis *Creators and Consecrators*, pp 339-380, and Miller *Artefacts As Categories*, pp 159, 167-169, 177, & 216.

[99] Jayaswal and Krishna [p 86] describe the process of marketing in Nauranga, Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh: "The finished products are distributed in accordance with the modern marketing system, and not with the *jajmānī* system. The order is placed first to the artisans through the middle man (*paykara*) who can be some business executive related to ordinary shops or a member of managing body of the Handicraft Board or Emporia. The figurines are priced through a definite system which has been accepted and formulated by the craftsmen and the *paykaras*. For instance, for the moderately decorated specimens Rs. 1 per inch is charged while for the over decorated ones Rs. 1.50 per inch is gotten. The animals are measured heightwise (elephant) and lengthwise (horse) in inches and their prices are calculated in accordance with the said index."

[100] Merchant middlemen frequently visit potters' workshops and place orders for large quantities of festival terracottas. When the order is filled, they pay the potter in cash, and usually arrange for the transportation of the items themselves. During a particular festival season, the products of a potter with good marketing connections may be sold in shops and markets in a radius as much as two hundred kilometres from the production centre. Usually the potter will retain his own stock of festival terracottas that his family members will sell retail themselves. See Chapter Four, pp 64-65. Through regular contact with a wide variety of communities outside his own, whether by a reciprocity of exchange with clientele or with familial interactions, by ceremonial or festival demands [see Chapter Two], or relations with itinerant agents, the average potter is usually better informed about the broader sphere of Indian and world affairs than his neighbours.

[101] According to the 1971 census [Schwartzberg p 243]. The percentage from the 1991 Census is not yet available, although the preliminary data lists 600,000 villages and 4,689 urban centres, with villages defined as having a maximum population of 5,000 and an average population of 637 [India Abroad, Vol XXI, No. 28, Friday, April 12, 1991].

impractical. Potters who live on the outskirts of these cities supply all or most of their goods on a cash basis only.[102]

In a good week, a town potter might sell 150 pots, accruing an income of three to four hundred rupees ($15 to $22 or £10 to £13) (Plate 1.43), while potters in large cities might make marginally more.[103] A potter working within the *jajmānī* system usually receives his payment in the form of grain, only once or twice a year after the harvests. Small sculptures might sell for half a rupee to two or three rupees (2 1/2 to 12 cents or 1 to 8 pence), while larger ones sell for thirty to forty rupees ($1.50 to $2.00 or £1 to £1/30p) (Plate 1.44).[104] Payment for a special request generally is fixed and not disputed, but it is most often received at a later date, long after the goods have been delivered. Even in a prosperous year when harvests are plentiful and a potter's income is relatively high, he probably will remain in debt because of the demands on his savings for dowries, funeral rites, and unforeseen ritual expenses.[105] Increasing competition from alternative commercial wares has decreased the demand for earthenware in the last few decades and, combined with an accelerating fuel shortage, has forced many

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[102] Based upon surveys of potters in Delhi, Allahabad, Varanasi, Patna, Bhubaneswar, Hyderabad, Madras, Trivandrum, Mysore, Bangalore, Bombay, Ahmedabad, and Jaipur.
[103] This figure is taken from an average of all the potters interviewed in 1990. For comparison, see Hubley p 32, Jayaswal and Krishna pp 13-18. The exchange rates are based upon 1990 rates.
[104] Saraswati [p 36] provides a table of the comparative price inflation over a three year period of 27 common terracotta items in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh.
[105] Refering to potters' debts in Orissa and their fluctuations of income according to season, Behera [p 28] states: "The potters borrow money and grain from other castemen in the village and lend to them also. These are usually short-term transactions. One borrows money to meet the expenditures of a contingent situation occasioned by, say, a marriage, birth, illness, pilgrimage, death, etc., and repays the loan during the ensuing harvest. ...Being under marginal and submarginal level of subsistence one more often than not runs short of food grains at least during the pre-harvest months. And consequently, he seeks small loans of food grains from his neighbours, who may be in a position to lend, so as to tide over the difficult situation. He pays back the loan during the following harvest period. In the rural agrarian setup, the only period of relative adequacy, either for a farmer or for a man of the specialist or service caste, is the time of harvest. And the harvest period is all the more convenient for a potter because he receives the annual payments from his patrons and the arrear dues from his regular customers during this period, and over and above he also harvest his own crops."

potters to seek other employment. Urban factories promise steady pay and entice family members away from their hereditary occupation. Land reforms and government subsidies to farming schemes have lured other potters into becoming full-time farmers.[106] The number of working potters may have greatly declined in the last century[107], but as long as tradition demands that household and ritual vessels and sculptures be recycled continuously, potters will be integral to the functioning of Indian society.

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[106] Fischer and Shah [*Rural Craftsman and Their Work*, pp 125-126] recorded the opinion of a potter in Ratadi, a village in Saurashtra, Gujarat: "You ask which I would prefer, pottery or agriculture, if I could earn the same money by either occupation? Well, I would do both to raise my income. If I had to choose only one of the these occupations, I would select agriculture and leave pottery, because slowly the demand for earthenware is sinking, day by day. ...('What would you want your son to learn?') I want him to learn tailoring. Some relatives of mine are tailors and I will send the boy to them. ...They have all given up the potter's craft because of the scarcity of fuel. The trees have been cut down." See also Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 111 and Saraswati p 69.

[107] The numbers of potters who have left their hereditary trade varies from region to region according to demand and the pressures of other occupations. The greatest change is in highly urbanized areas where potters are more directly affected by the ready accessibility to alternative commodities, the easing of traditional strictures requiring the periodic replacement of ritual and utilitarian terracottas, and an enhanced desirability of more prestigious employment. In contrast, Behura [p 221] recorded in 1978 that 92% of the 386 potter families he surveyed in Orissa were still occupied with pottery production, while it was the principal occupation of 308 families.

Plate 1.1) Terracotta cups and bowls for tea and milk products are intended for a single use and then broken underfoot. Ultimately practical, they are biodegradable and sanitary and create jobs for many potters; their modern alternatives, plastics and metal, are non-biodegradable, far less sanitary, and mass-produced (Allahabad District, Uttar Pradesh).

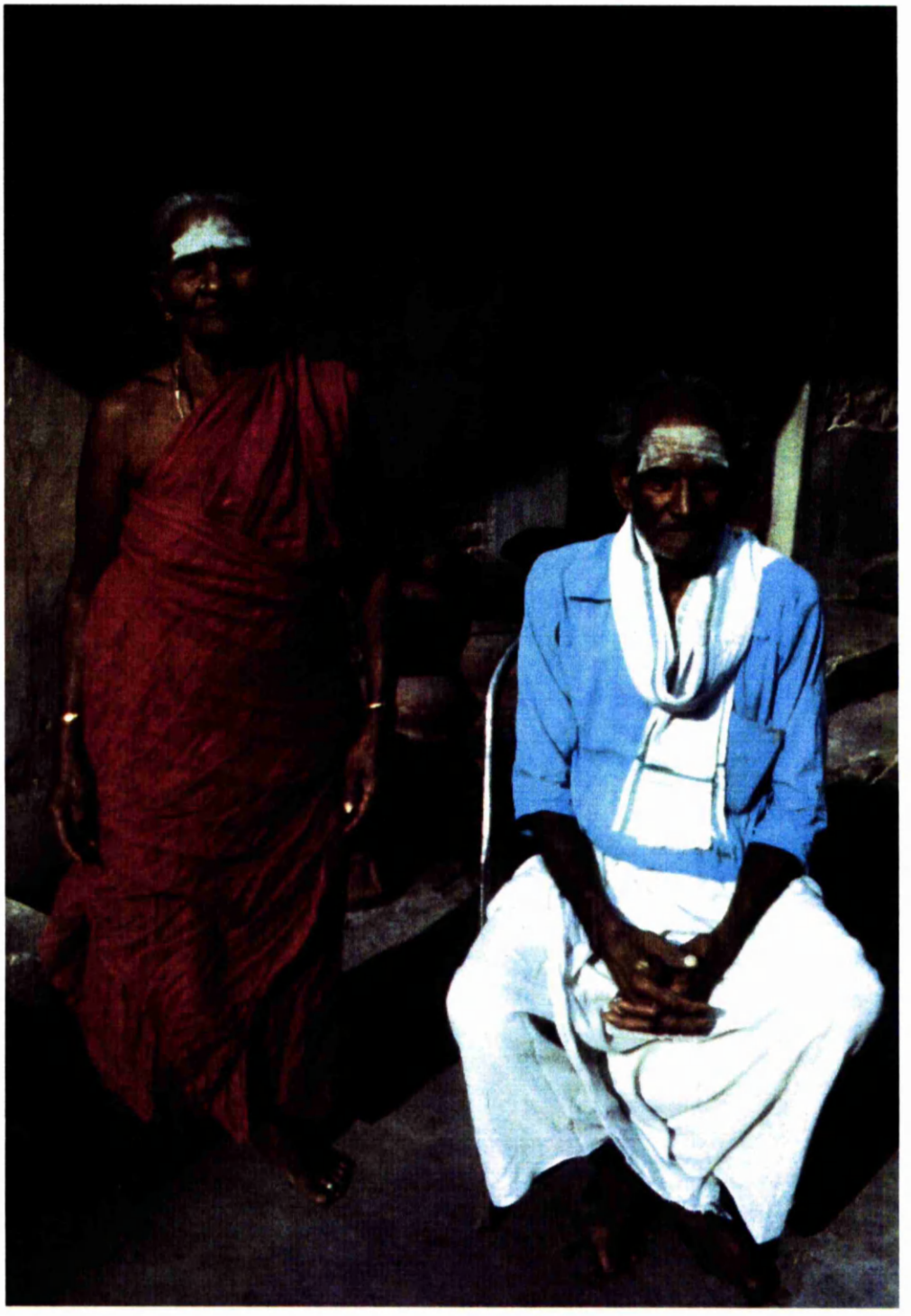

Plate 1.2) Vaithyalinga Pathar and his wife, Amma, of Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

Plate 1.3) Potters often live in joint families, pooling their labour to manufacture clay vessels. In the village of Salur, Vishakapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh, water pots are being thrown and then beaten into shape alongside huge livestock feeding troughs.

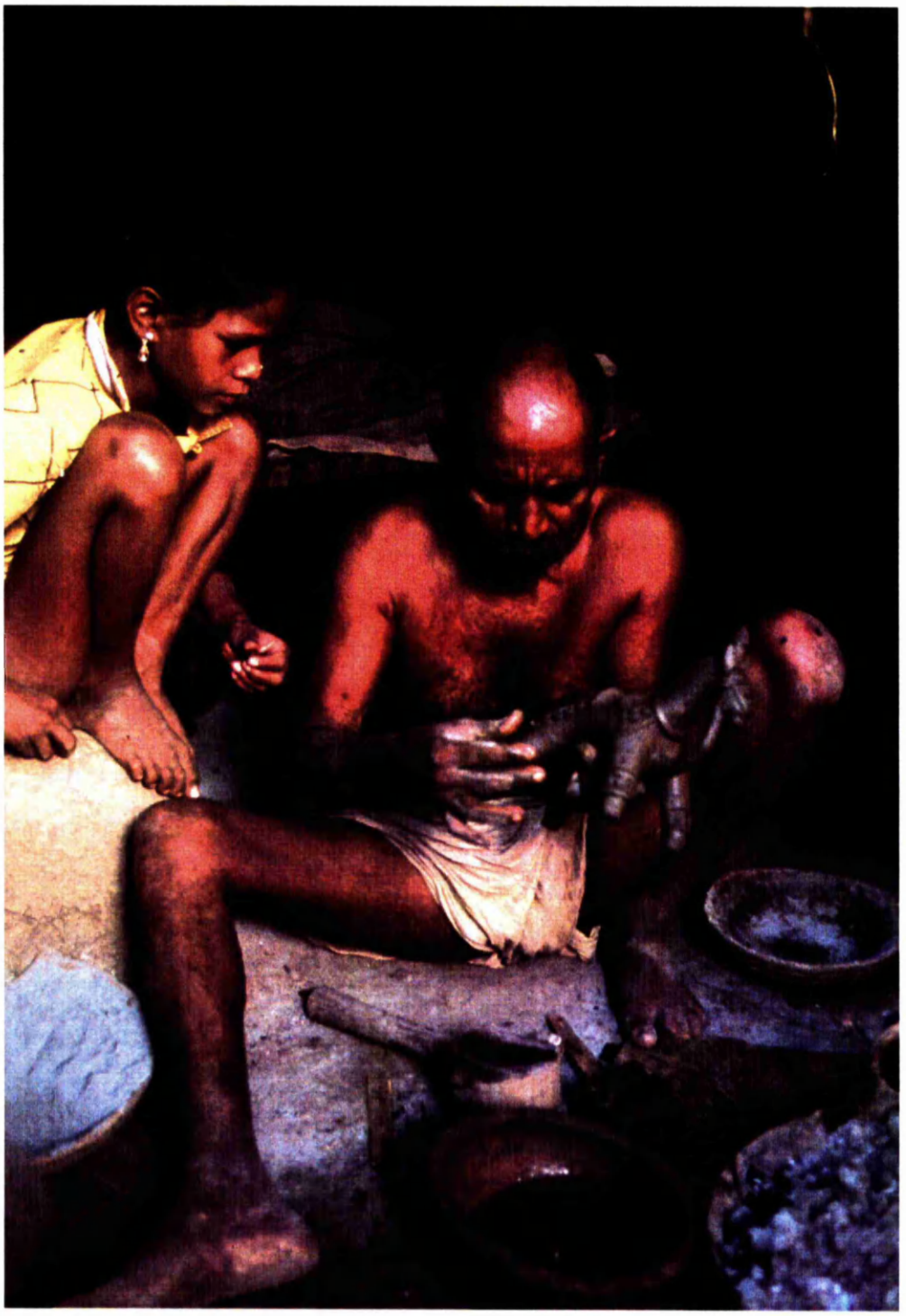

Plate 1.4) Learning the craft by observation and imitation, a girl in Kheran, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, watches closely as her father sculpts a clay horse.

Plate 1.5) A potter mixes tempers of rice chaff and sand with his clay before sculpting in Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

Plate 1.6) Resting in the centre of a typical spoked South Indian wheel are metal tools for cutting, chiselling, shaving, and incising the clay, and stone anvils and wooden mallets used to shape pottery after it has been taken from the wheel; to one side are beads for burnishing the finished vessels, while on the other side is a hole integral to the wheel's propulsion (Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu).

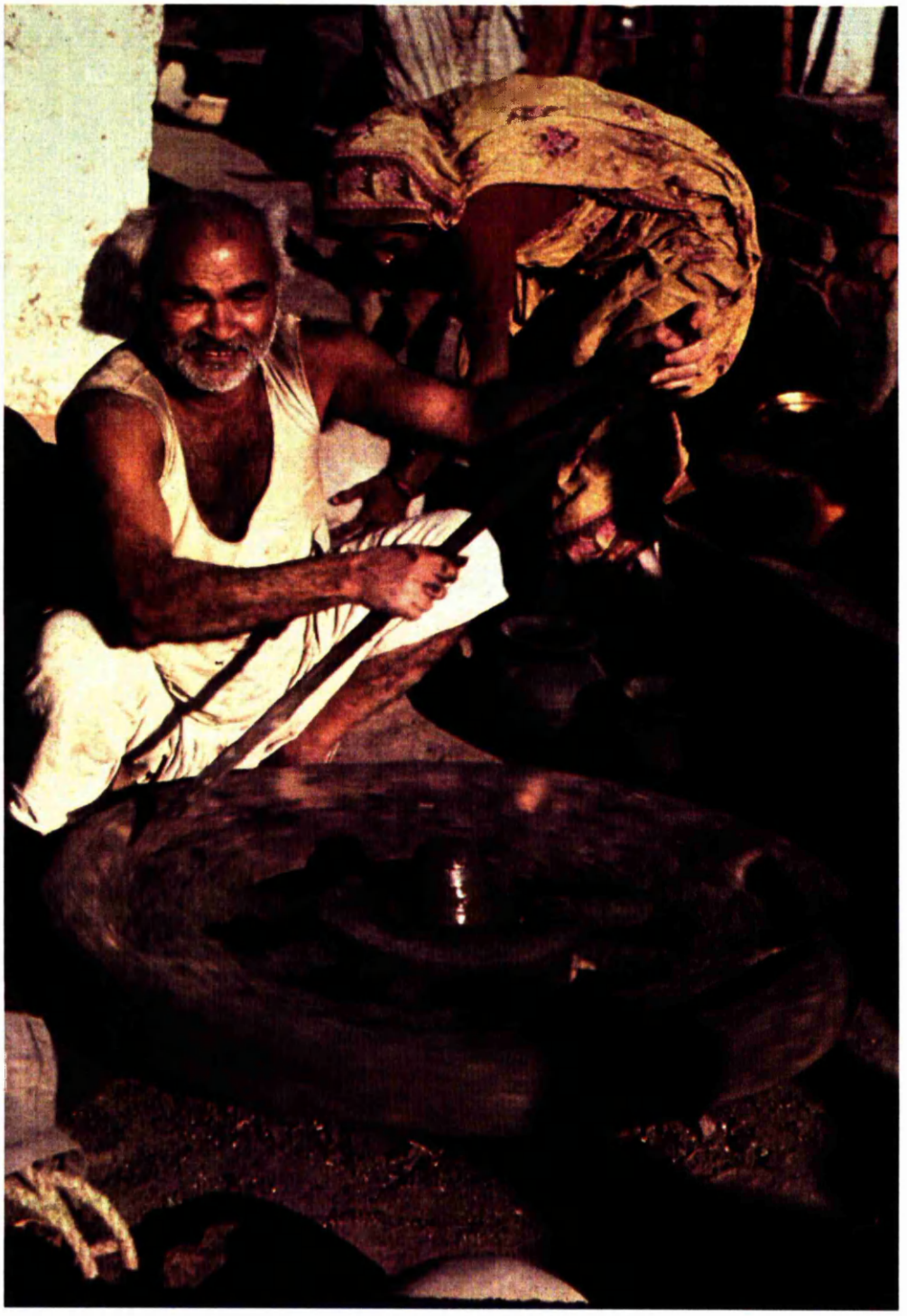

Plate 1.7) Potters' wheels in Central India are spoked and often have internal sockets and detached pivots. Here, a potter in western Madhya Pradesh can maintain the momentum of his wheel by periodically turning the stick in its hole while still keeping his squatting position (Chandpur, Alirajpur District).

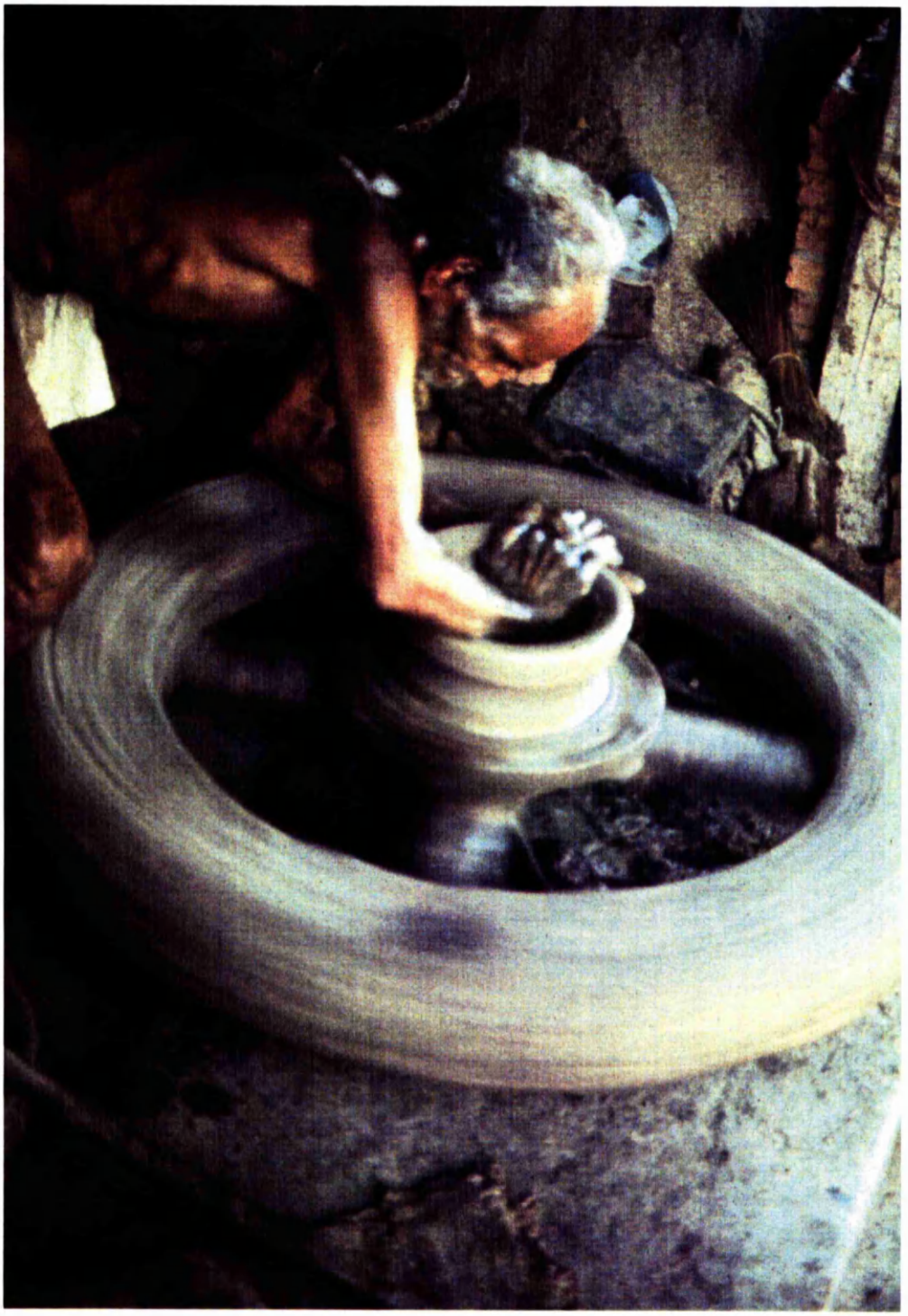

Plate 1.8) Throwing a pot on an Indian wheel takes great strength and agility, as exemplified here by a seventy-three-year-old potter who muscles a cone of clay into a wide, flat shape before drawing up the walls into the shape of a water pot. His wheel is typical of those of South India — spoked with an attached pivot (Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu).

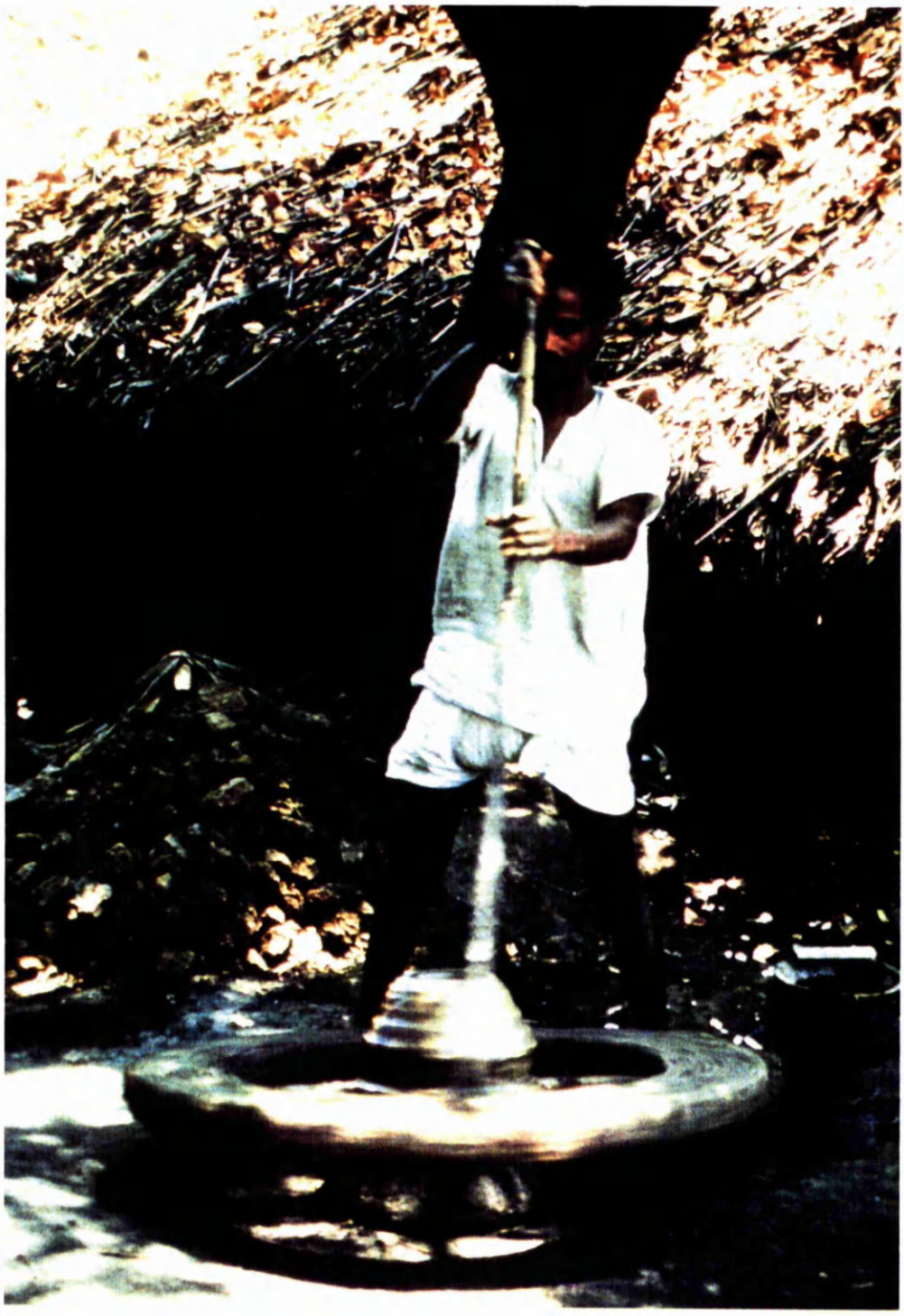

Plate 1.9) A stick, fitted into a hole on the wheel's rim, is revolved anticlockwise faster and faster until the wheel is spinning rapidly. Then the potter removes the stick and he squats to throw his vessels (Salur, Vishakapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh).

Plate 1.10) Potters in various parts of India assume different positions when throwing their vessels. In Khonant, Puri District, Orissa, a potter straddles the edge while he crouches over his wheel to create the force he needs to produce a vessel.

Plate 1.11) The simplest of all wheels has been used to throw the large vessels in the foreground. With his right hand, this *Hatere* potter turns a terracotta plate centred upon a sharp rock, while with his left hand he throws the pots he requires (Dhamna, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh).

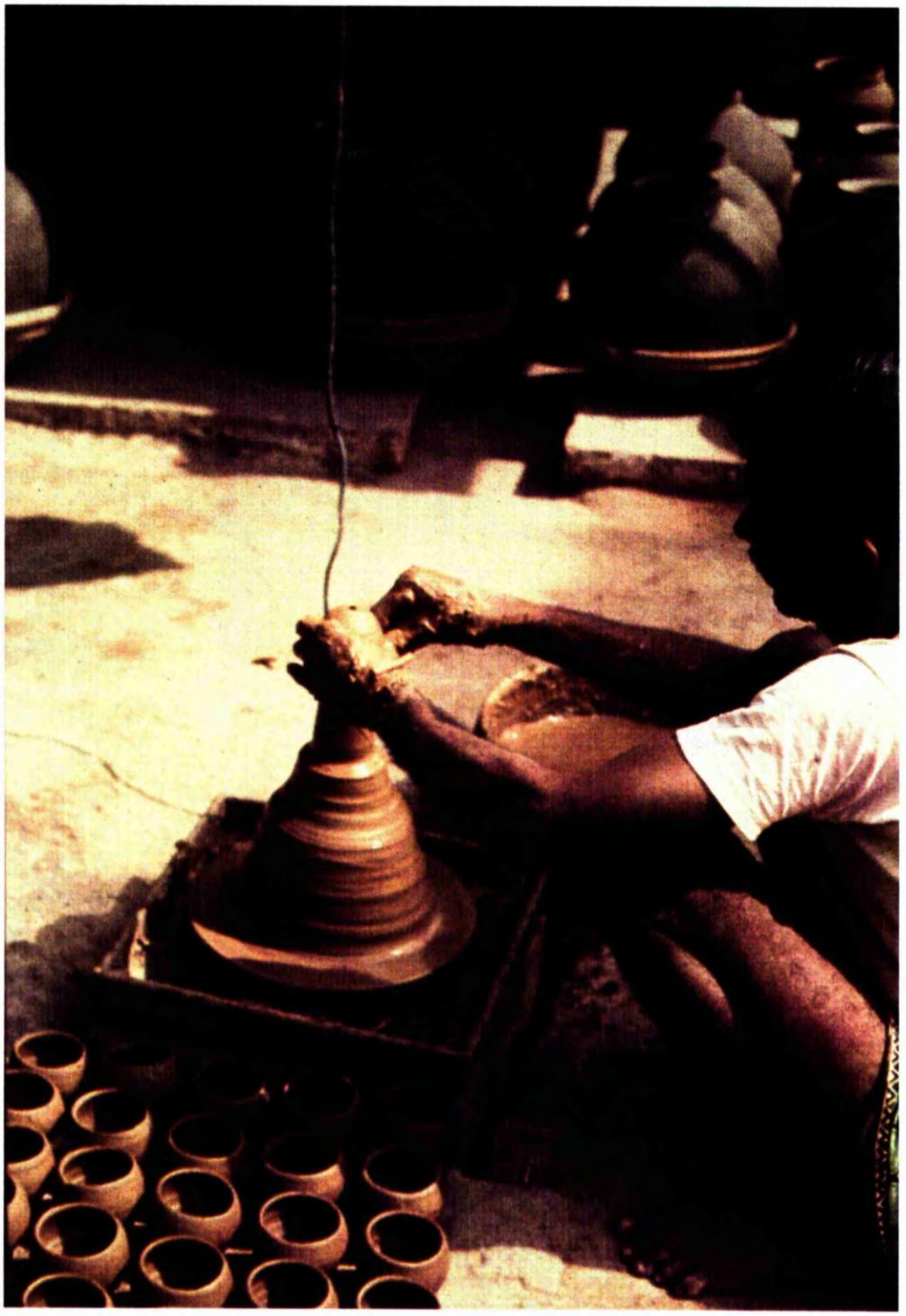

Plate 1.12) An electical wire runs down from an overhead socket to reach this electric wheel in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh; after the vessel is cut from the wheel, however, it is still beaten into shape in the traditional manner (as evidenced by the pots resting in bowls at the rear).

Plate 1.13) Resting an open ended pot upon his lap, a potter from Salur, Andhra Pradesh, adds clay and beats the hole closed with a wooden mallet.

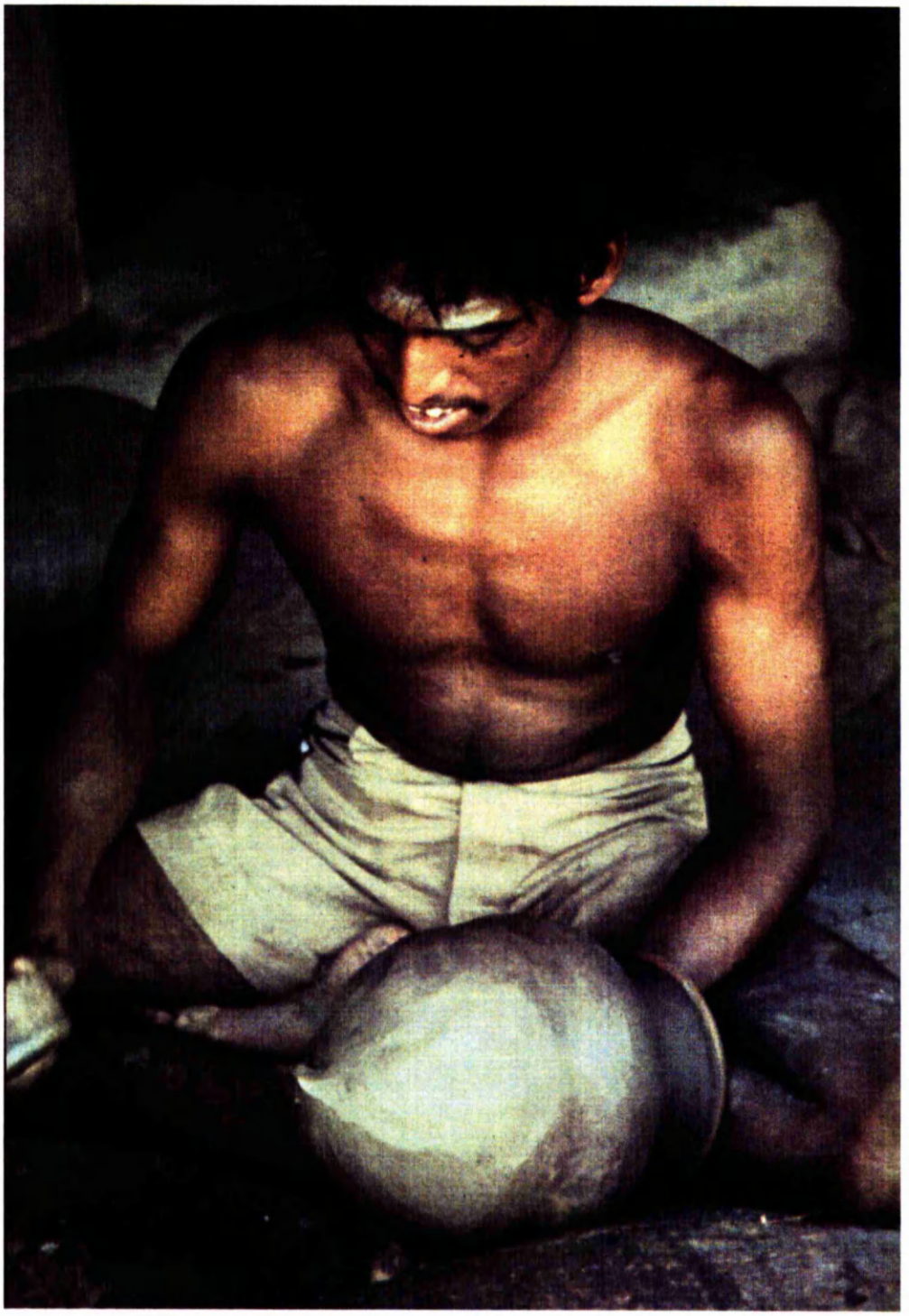

Plate 1.14) Holding a convex stone anvil on the inside of a pot with one hand, a young Tamil potter beats the clay against it with a wooden mallet, creating an even rounded bottom to the vessel (Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District).

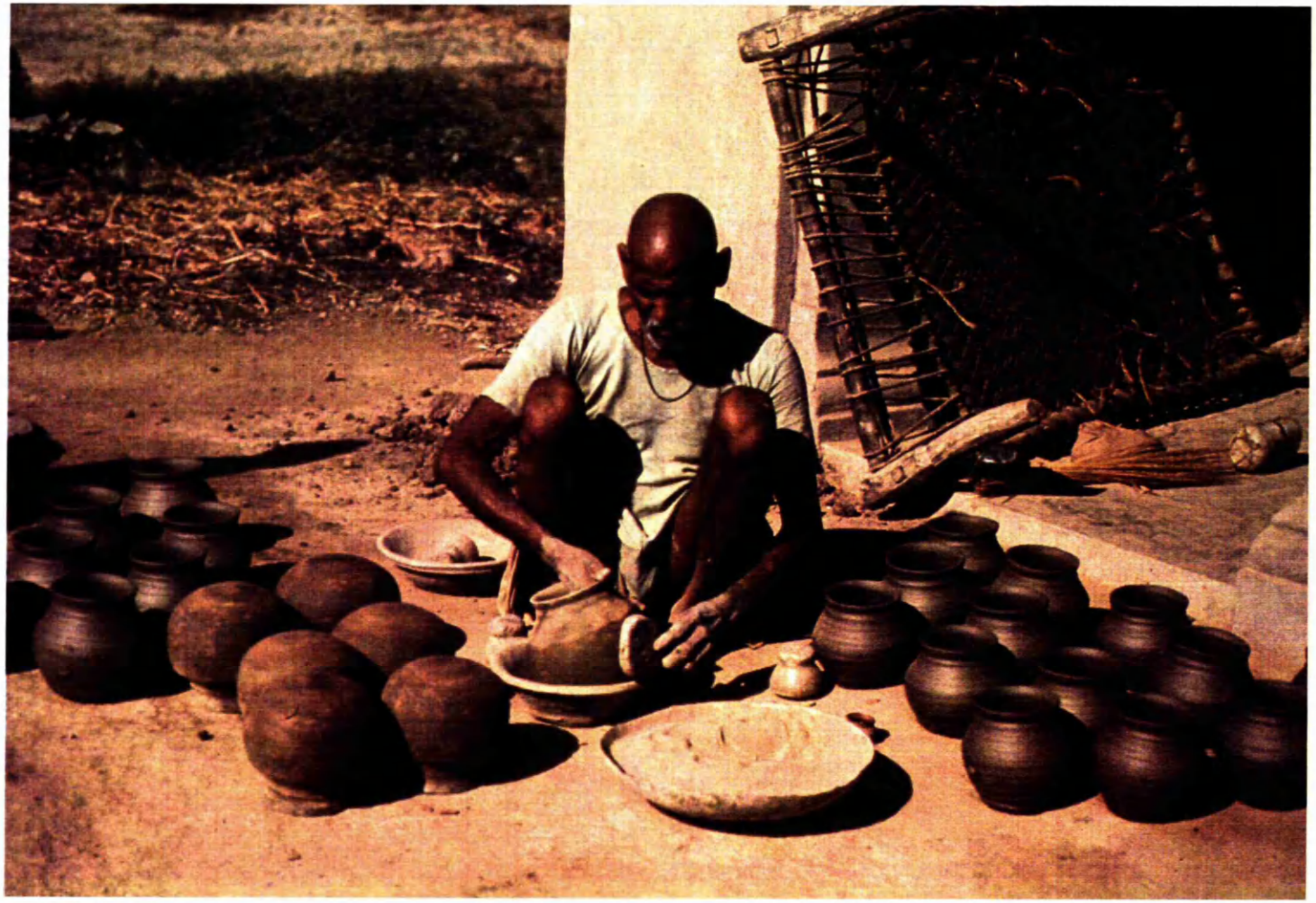

Plate 1.15) In North India, the base of a pot is thrown with an extra thickness so that when it is cut from the wheel, this clay can be pounded into a rounded shape while the potter supports its edge in a bowl or basket (Kauśambī, Allahabad District, Uttar Pradesh).

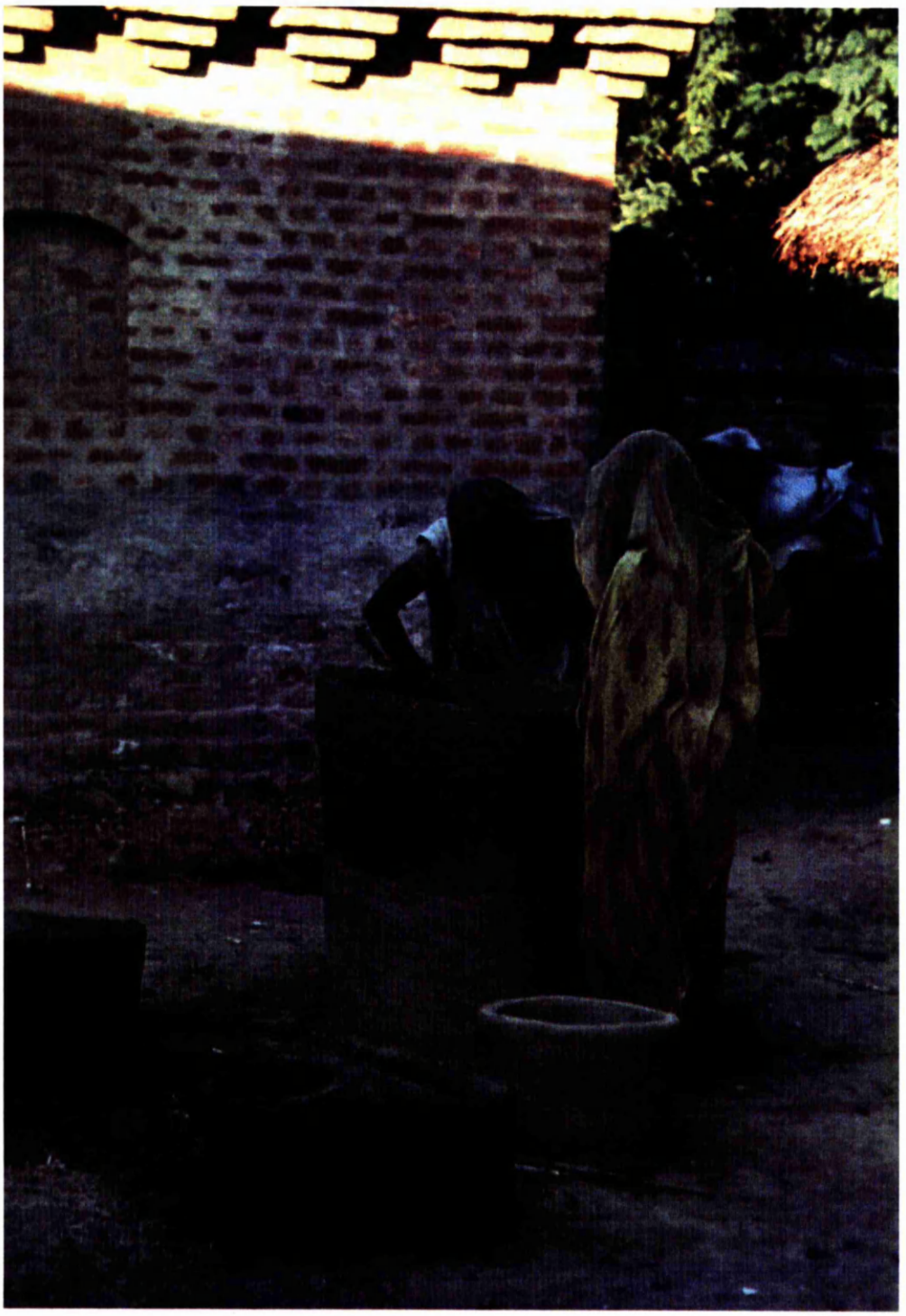

Plate 1.16) Women in Ghivohi, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh, construct a large storage vessel with slabs of clay added one upon the other. This and the stoves and manger at their feet will remain unfired.

Plate 1.17) This 1.5 metre (5 feet) high terracotta grain-storage bin in Deohati, Baroda District, Gujarat, was thrown on the wheel and decorated prior to firing.

Plate 1.18) A potter's wife in Kharwar, North Kanara District, Karnataka, presses clay onto a drape-mould to make bowls.

Plate 1.19) A woman in a remote village in the bleak Thar desert of Rajasthan has made these small clay sculptures of goats to be used as votive offerings to the Goddess in supplication for protection of the community's major livelihood, goat herding (Gogadev, Jaisalmer District).

Plate1.20) Clay pressed in a double mould to create the sculpture of an elephant (Khura, Allahabad District, Uttar Pradesh).

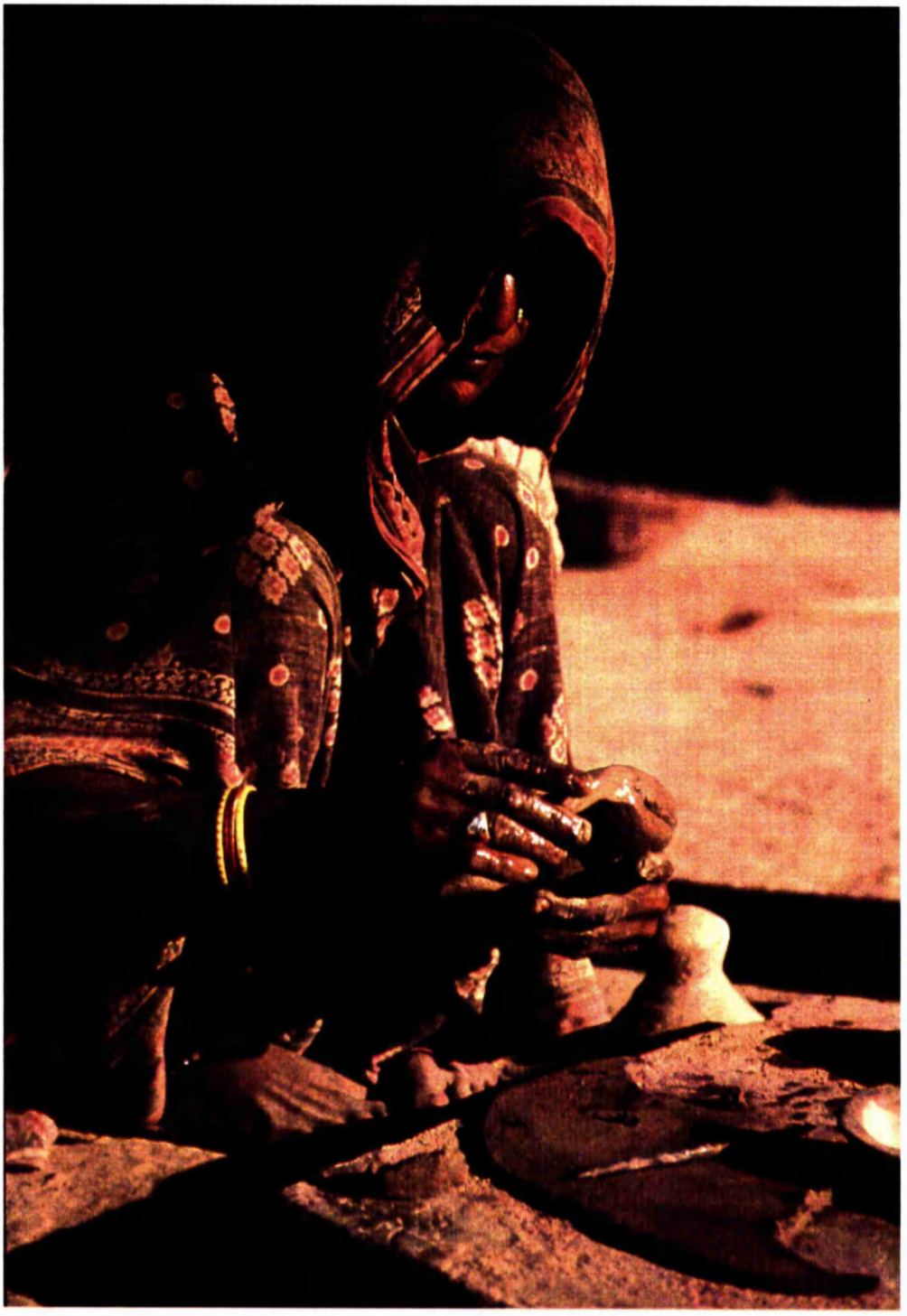

Plate 1.21) After opening the mould, this woman smooths over the resulting seams and adds the elephant's trunk (Khura, Allahabad District, Uttar Pradesh).

Plate 1.22) The stick-figure body of the elephant rider is sculpted last, its delicate face pressed on with a separate mould. Once dried, it will be fired and then painted to look like the finished product to the right (Khura, Allahabad District, Uttar Pradesh).

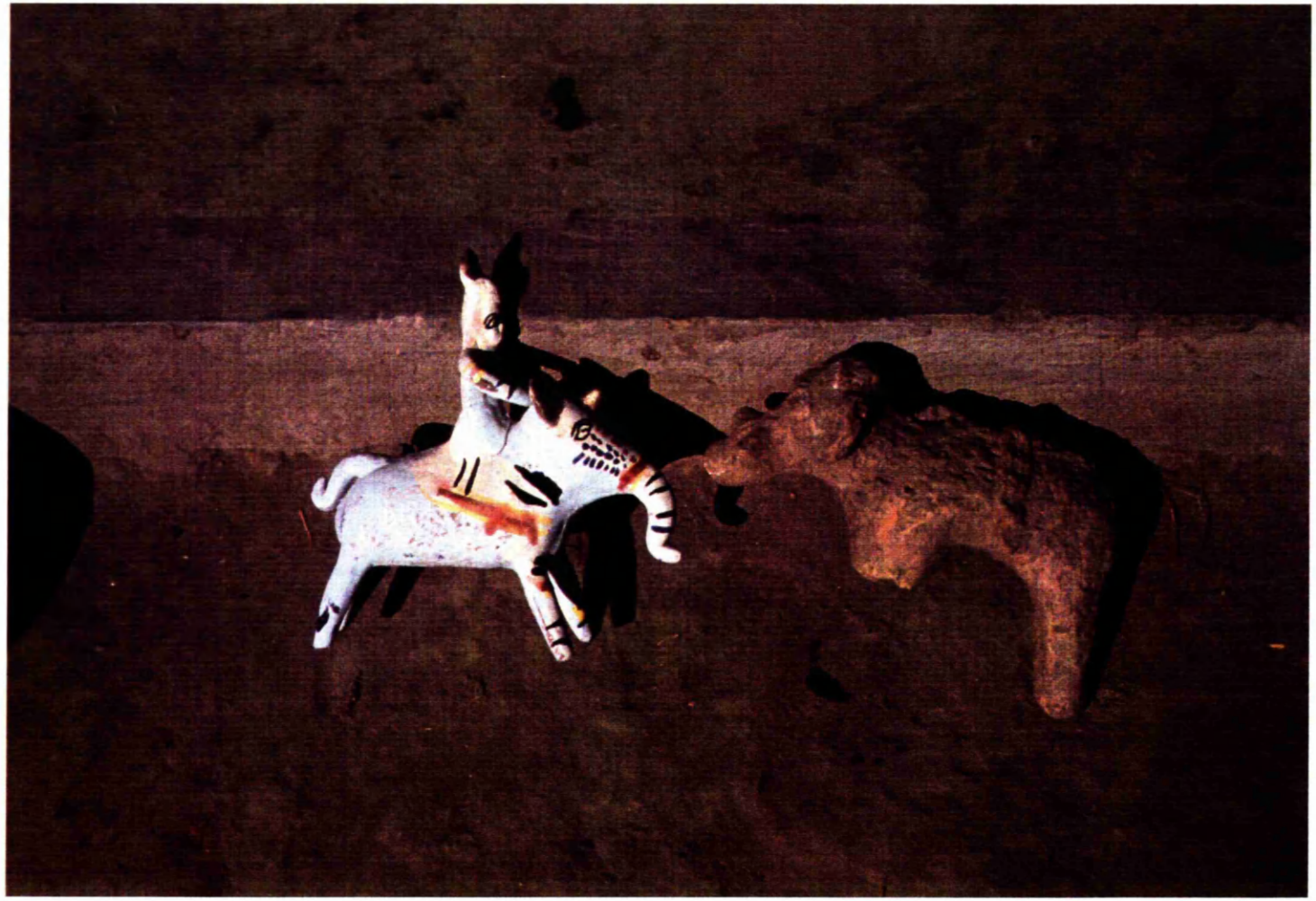

Plate 1.23) This newly-painted elephant figure sculpted in Khura, Allahabad District, Uttar Pradesh, will be sold in a village market for the *Divālī* festival. Next to it is a broken second century *Kuṣāṇa* elephant excavated from nearby Kauśambī. Although its rider is missing, the similarity between these two figures, and others in museum collections, raises questions about the contemporary continuity of ancient traditions.

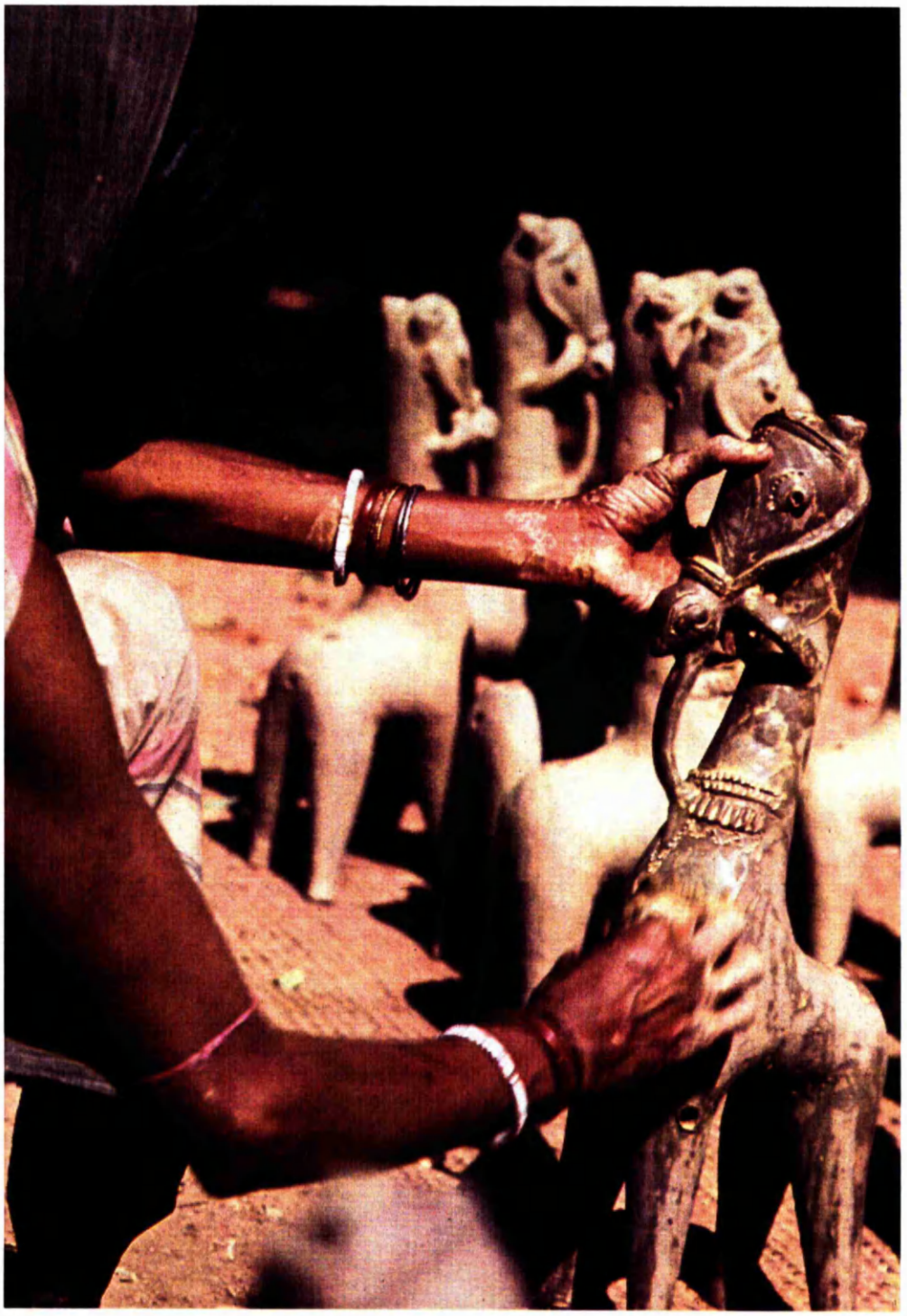

Plate 1.24) A potter's wife in Panchmura, Bankura District, West Bengal, covers a terracotta horse with a clay slip that will deepen the red colour of the fired object.

Plate 1.25) Vessels used for everyday household functions usually are minimally decorated, if at all. Those used in sacred rites of passage, particularly wedding ceremonies, however, are often painted with elaborate designs, such as this marriage pot decorated by a bride's mother in Vishakapatnam District, Andhra Pradesh.

Plate 1.26) Before firing in Bhuj, Kutch District, Gujarat, a Muslim woman paints decorations on a terracotta elephant commissioned by a Hindu client for donation to a shrine.

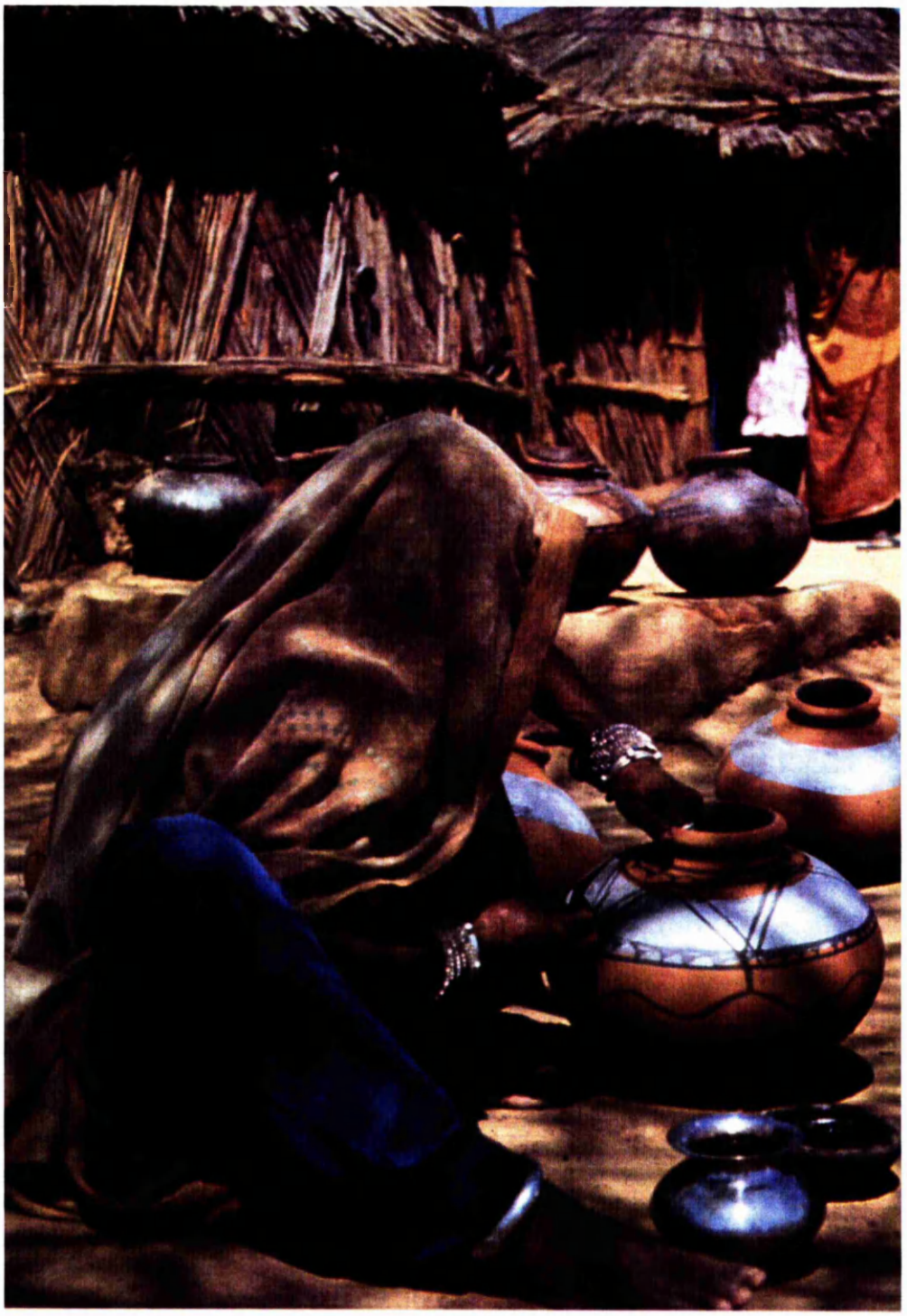

Plate 1.27) In Nawalgarh, Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan, a potter's wife sits in front of her thatched reed house and turns a water pot to apply a series of painted triangles to its sides.

Plate 1.28) Reduction firing is the only difference between these red and the black pots for sale in this market in Seoni, Madhya Pradesh; all are made of the same clay and painted with the same slips. After firing, these paper-thin vessels have been further burnished with smooth beads to make them shine.

Plate 1.29) A kiln filled with wheel-thrown, half-round roof tiles, similar to those roofing the potters' house at the rear, is almost ready to be fired. Drying in the foreground are clay tubes to be used as gutter spouts (Deohati, Baroda District, Gujarat).

Plate 1.30) Huge temporary domes interlaced with precious wood fuel are constructed to fire the bricks required by builders in the desert of northern Rajasthan. (Churu District)

Plate 1.31) Three stages of brick firing are evident at a manufacturing site in Karnataka. In the centre, smoke is rising from a firing in process; on the right is a finished kiln ready for dismantling, the stoke holes at its base clearly evident; while on the left is an opened kiln from which bricks are carried to building sites (Tumkur District).

Plate 1.32) Cow dung mixed with straw is the primary source of fuel for most Indian kilns. The high temperatures maintained during the firing of this large domed permanent kiln in western Uttar Pradesh require a huge supply of manure bricks that will be fed into a stoke hole on the far side (Bareilly District).

Plate 1.33) Just finished and drying in the sun, these water pots surround a kiln whose low walls will support a temporary dome of vessels, fuel, and mud during firing (Deohati, Baroda District, Gujarat).

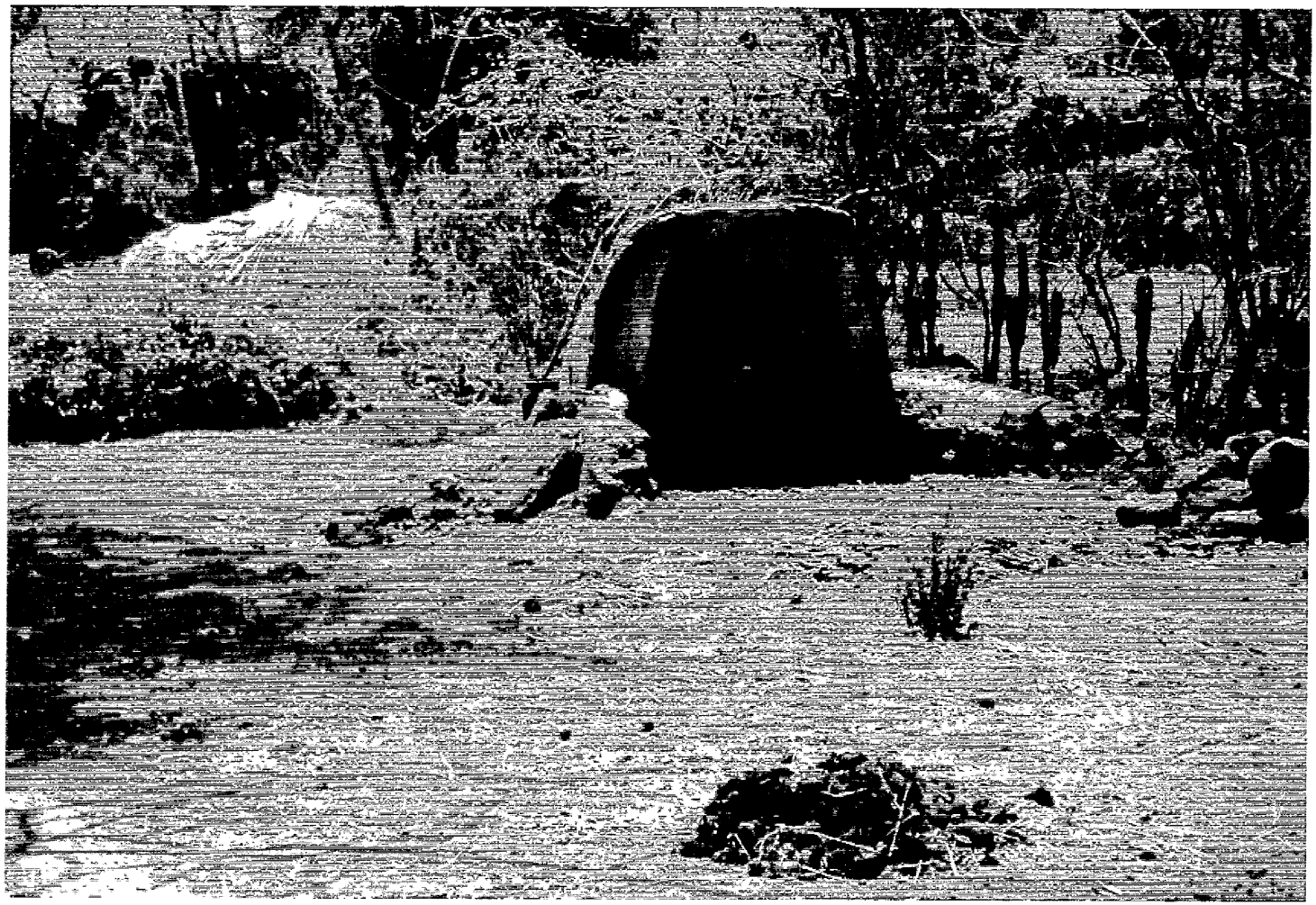

Plate 1.34) This permanent kiln is constructed of clay in a horse-shoe shape and rises from a low height at the rear to a large opening whose pillared front will be sealed during firing (Banpur, Puri District, Orissa).

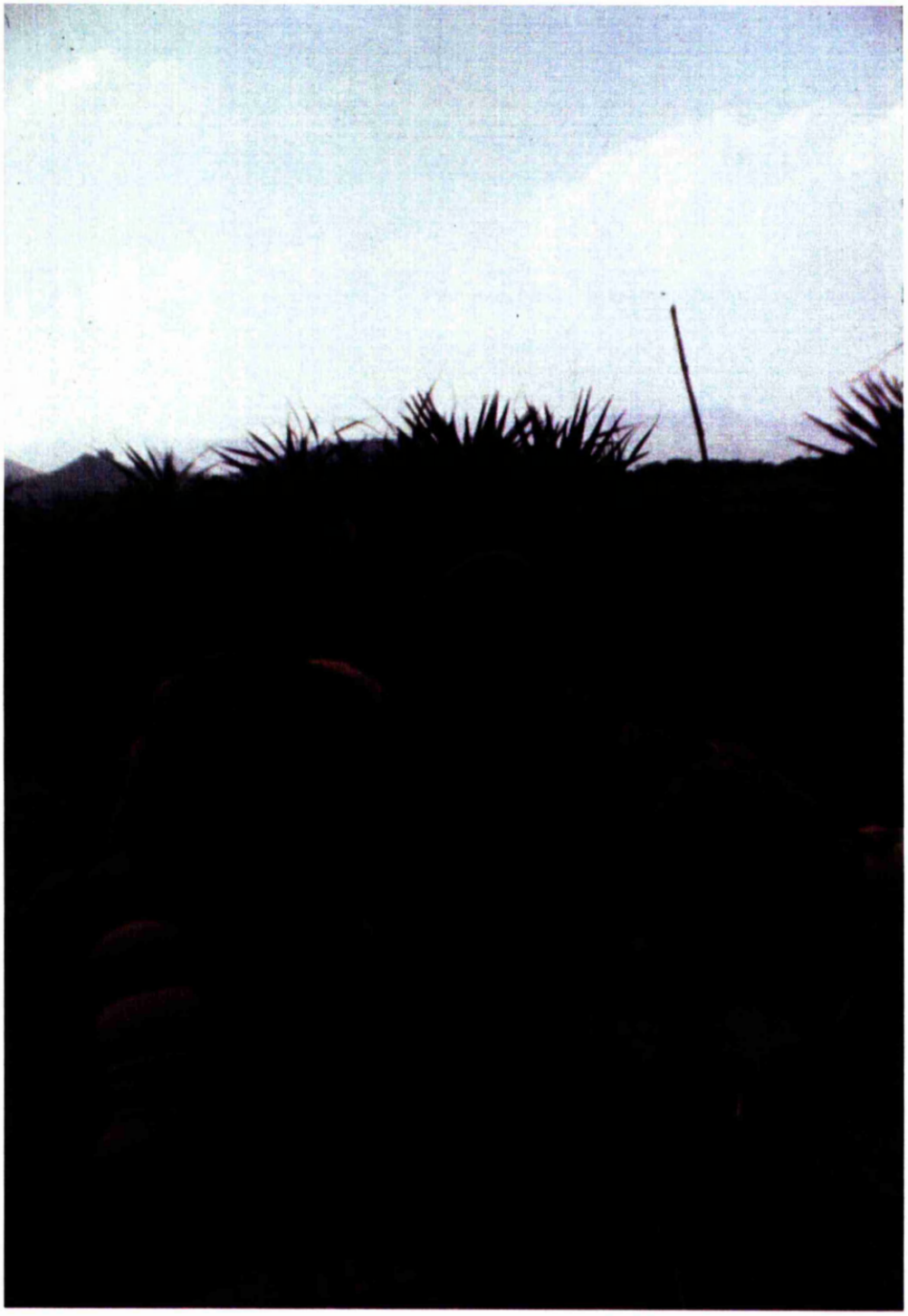

Plate 1.35) A potter and his wife in Khonant, Puri District, Orissa, stand in front of a permanent kiln constructed of upturned terracotta pots mortared into a dome.

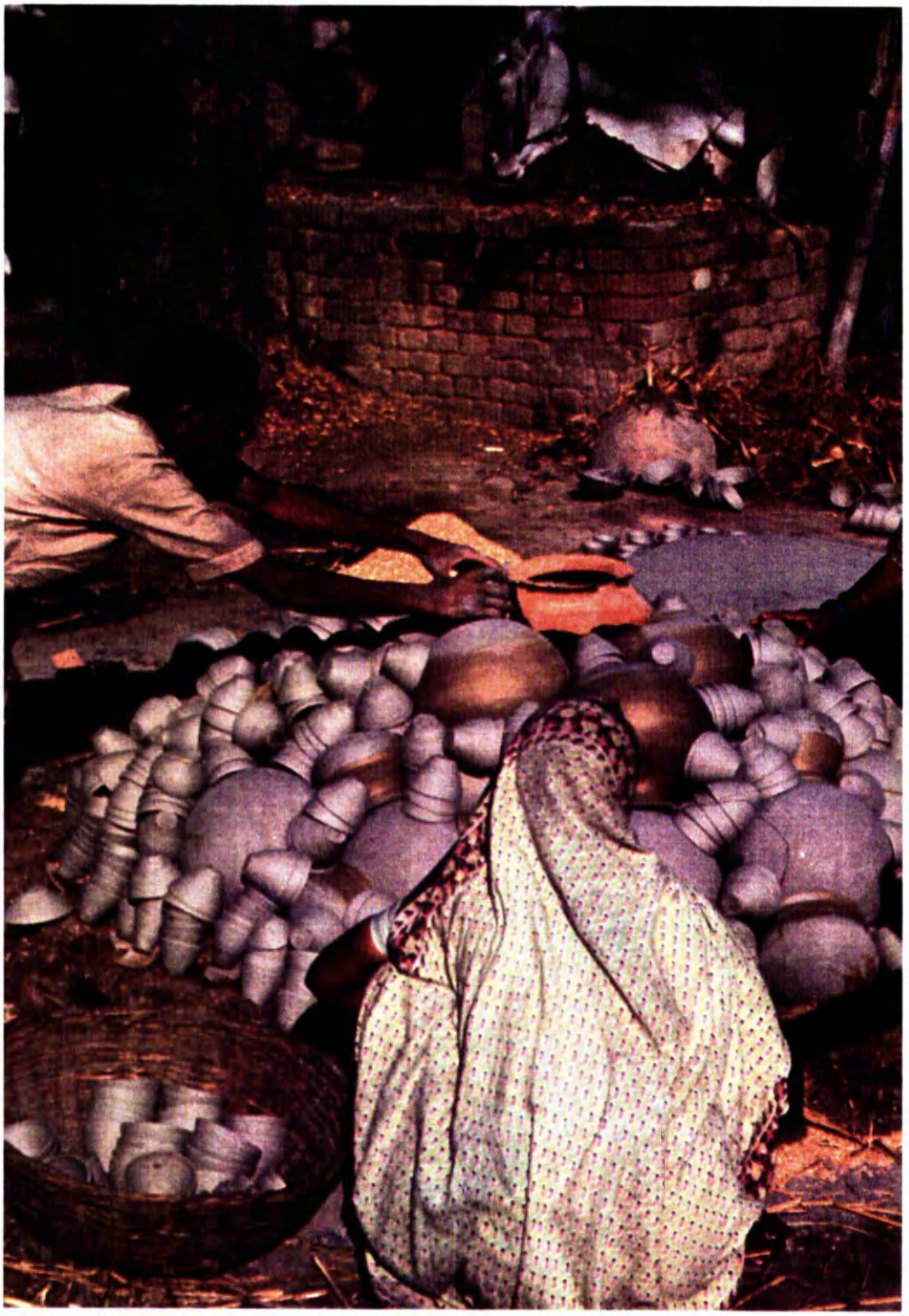

Plate 1.36) The last unfired vessels are carefully added to a temporary field kiln in Mundera, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh. The entire process of building and firing this kiln may be seen in Plates 6.25-6.32.

Plate 1.37) A freshly opened temporary kiln reveals coils of stacked teacups surrounding a central water pot (Nizamabad, Azamgarh District, Uttar Pradesh).

Plate 1.38) Catering largely to the demands of a tribal clientele, potters in Deogaon, Bolangir District, Orissa, use reduction firing to make blackware, some of which is tied with ropes to allow for easier transportation by nomads.

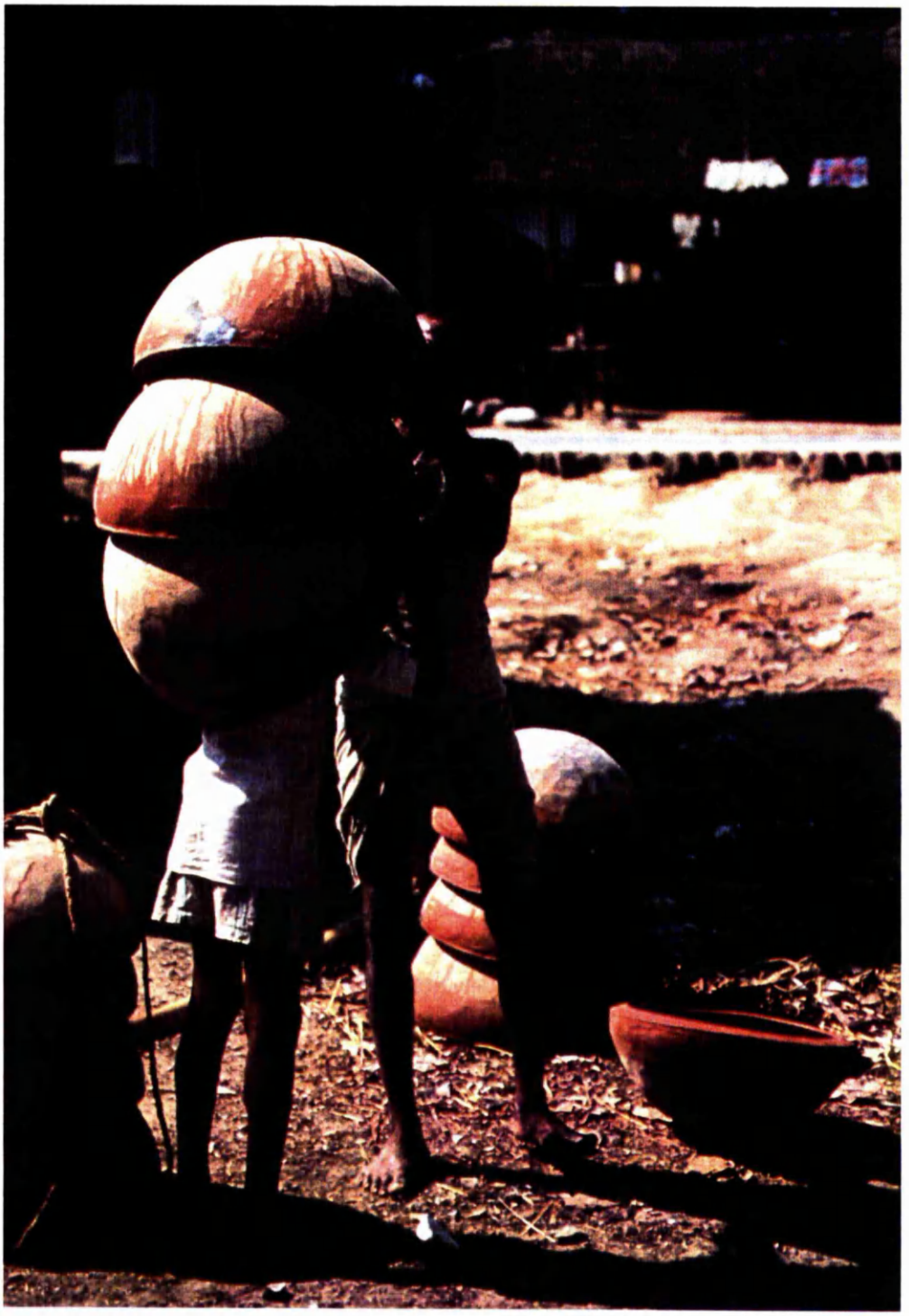

Plate 1.39) A potter helps his teenage son unload large cooking pots to be sold in a weekly market. (Garaura Bazar, Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh)

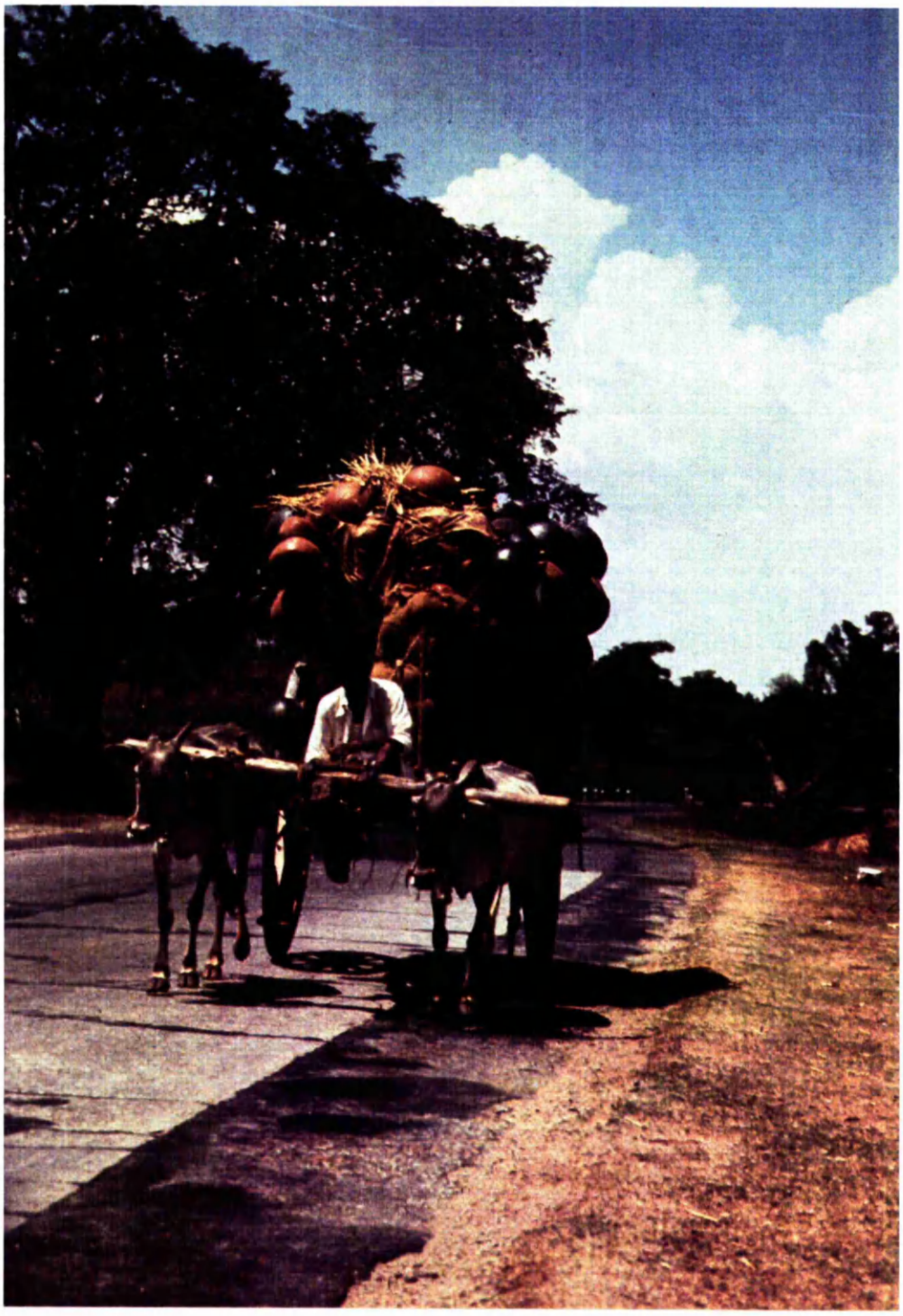

Plate 1.40) A bullock cart loaded high with pots packed in straw is being driven to a town market by a middleman in Mysore District, Karnataka.

Plate 1.41) In common with potters in many rural areas throughout the subcontinent, craftsmen from all over Ganjam District, Orissa, converge once a week to sell their wares in a central market.

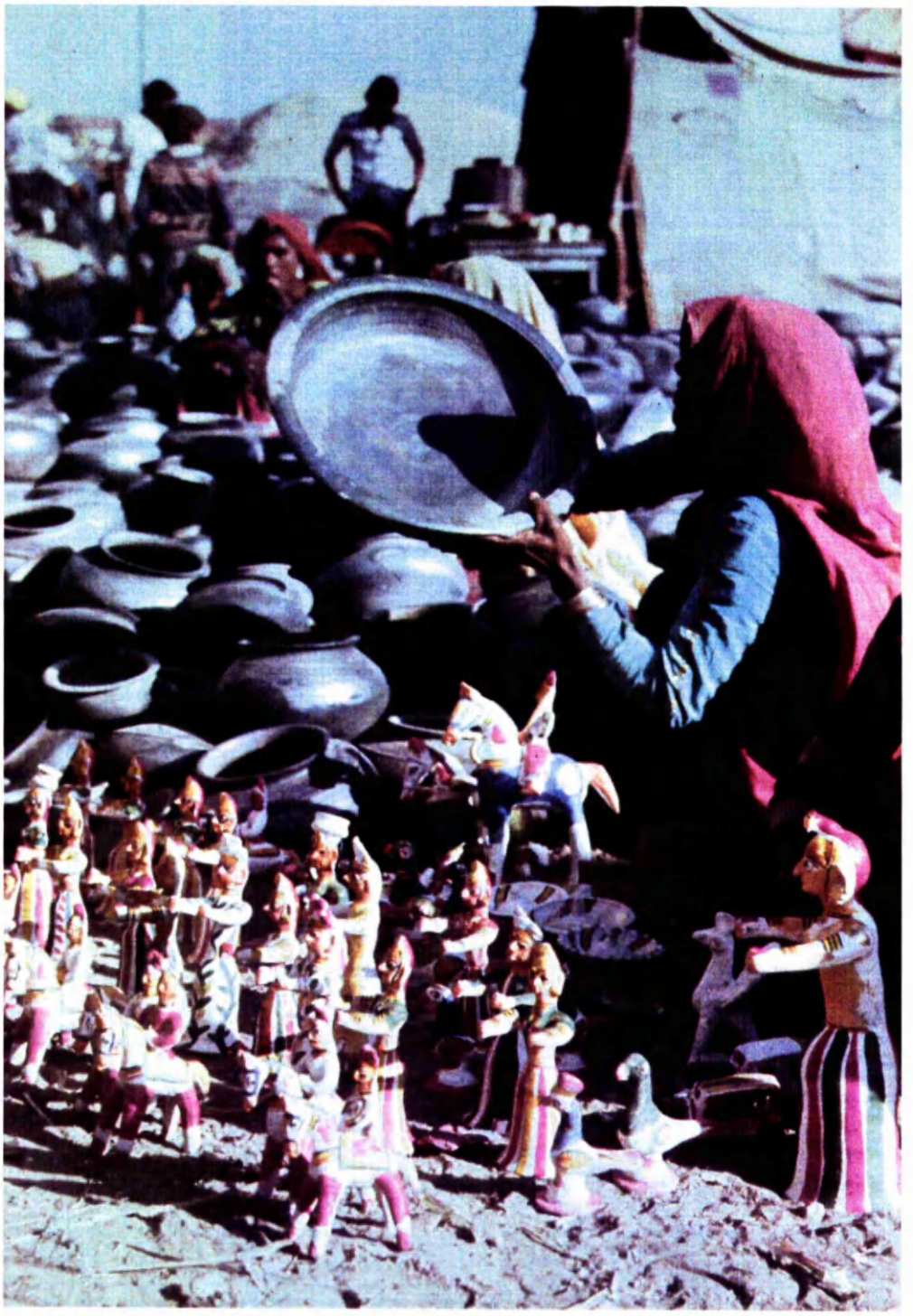

Plate 1.42) Potters journey many miles to sell their wares at the annual camel fair in Nagaur, Rajasthan. Besides making traditional black cooking and storage vessels, they sculpt and brightly paint images of the god *Gaṅ* the goddess *Gaurī*, horsemen, birds, and even buses and lorries to be used in the approaching *Gaṅgaur* festival.

Plate 1.43) Brightly painted water pots are stacked for sale in one of the main streets of Churu, Rajasthan.

Plate 1.44) A potter carries terracotta elephants in a basket on his head to sell in a roadside market in Muzzarfarpur, Bihar. They will be purchased by devotees for use in the upcoming *Chattha* festival.

CHAPTER TWO
THE SACRED AND RITUAL ROLES OF POTTERS AND POTS

One pot, One potter,
And One who is the Creator of the Universe,
One wheel which has created all sculptures,
And One Point in the centre where the core dwells.
— Kabir[1]

Touching his forehead with the fingers of his right hand before he begins his daily work, a potter acknowledges the power of his gods and their gift to him of creativity.[2] The clay he employs is the embodiment of earth, usually viewed as a goddess.[3] His tools were designed by the gods to create the vessels and sculptures integral to their worship. By honouring his deities, he ensures his right to change soil into sacred form and he maintains his link to his earliest ancestor: *Prajāpati*, Lord of Creativity.

Hindu potters all over India begin their day in this manner. Some light incense and wave it over their wheels to define the sanctity of the area and to cleanse it of evil spirits. The very devout pray every time they begin moulding

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[1]Tagore, Rabindranath. *Songs of Kabir*. New Delhi: Cosmo, 1985.

[2] Although this gesture was the most frequently observed among all the surveyed potters, individual preferences, family and community standards, and regional variations all contribute to the precise manner of a given potter's prayers.

[3] 'O Earth, thy centre and thy navel, all forces that have issued from thy body, set us amid those forces; breathe upon us. I am the son of Earth; Earth is my Mother.' [*Atharva Veda VII 3*] Numerous Indian myths and legends describe the earth as the body of the goddess, composed of soil. The Mother Goddess, worshipped throughout India today, is most closely associated with the ground and with clay. It is She who bears the earth and all creation. Countless rituals, many of which are referred to in Chapters Three through Seven, equate the fashioning of a simple clay figurine with the birth of the Goddess: the Goddess is clay and clay is the Goddess. After the rituals, She is dissolved in water back into the earth — the Indian counterpart to the biblical: 'Dust to Dust'. The Rg. Veda X.18 says: "Betake thee to the lap of the Earth, the Mother, of Earth far-speading, very kind and gracious [as quoted in Anand p 7]."For further references, see Srivastava *Mother Goddess in Indian Art, Archaeology and Literature*, Stutley pp 50-51, Kinsley pp 98-199, Jayakar p 250, Kramrisch "Indian Terra-cottas" p 92, and Maury pp 112-118.

a new lump of clay.[4] A Tamil potter portrayed his conviction that his tools symbolize the entire cosmos by saying, "Our religious belief is that the [wheel's] pivot is Lord *Brahma*, the wheel is Lord *Viṣṇu* and the lump of clay is Lord *Śivaliṅga*. The water used for our work is considered as *Gaṅgā* ."[5]

Working on the wheel is a form of prayer for many potters. Each item thrown should exactly conform to the prototype. Improvisation and personal expression are not valued.[6] The concentration and precision of craftsmanship resemble the practice of yoga. The revolutions of the wheel and the minimal movements of the potter are *mantras* and *mudrās* that allow the craftsman to withdraw into a meditative state.[7] Each vessel he produces is the outward symbol of these prayers, bonding him with the spirit he sees within his tools and in the clay itself.[8]

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[4] Cort ["Temple Potters of Puri" p 39] noted: 'The main activity of the potters' *pūjā* is to purify and worship the workshop, the kiln, the wheel, and the other tools. But a reverent attitude toward their workspace prevails throughout the year. Their wheels and tools, gifts of *Viṣṇu*, are worshipped at the start and finish of each workday, by laying a flower on the wheel or by touching the paddle to the forehead. The potters believe that their workshop is the "abode of *Viṣṇu*" wherein all castes are equal — the same equality that is conferred by *mahāprasād*. Potters do not enter their workshop when they consider themselves to be polluted by a birth or death in the family. Before unloading their kiln, whose fire has purified their pots, they bathe and pray.'

[5] As told to the author by Vaithyalinga Pathar of Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, the potter focused upon in Chapter Five.

[6] For further exploration of this concept, see Huyler *Village India*, p 52.

[7] When questioned about his process, a potter stated "When I work on the wheel I let my mind go blank and *Bhagwān* comes to me. Then the pots just keep being made, one after another. It is *Bhagwān* who makes them." Refering to the potters with whom he worked in Madurai, Tamil Nadu, Stephen Inglis [Creators and Consecrators, p 203] commented: "The cone of earth placed upon the wheel becomes a focus for reverence as the work begins. Although the *Velar* do not now 'worship' the cone of earth as the '*Śiva Liṅgam*' or as '*the god Gaṇeśa*' as other potters are said to do ..., the worship of mud on the wheel is known to the *Velar*. ...General rules of conduct considered appropriate in the presence of god are observed, if somewhat loosely, throughout the forming stage of pot making. Footware should be removed at a polite distance from the wheel, loud or silly behaviour is discouraged. Rather than god being 'present in the lump of clay'..., the *Velar* see an identity between divinity and the entire endeavour involving potter, wheel and earth. It is the relationship between these elements and the process in which they unite that is the object of reverence."

[8] "Craftsmen have regarded *Viśvakarma* as the divine source of inspiration for their work. In this sense, craft skills are not the accumulation of centuries, but flow directly from divine to mortal creator. The craftsman meditated with his tools in his hand before the unformed raw material [ibid. p 28]." See also Kramrisch "Traditions of the Indian Craftsman" p 62.

At least once a year, each potting family worships its tools during a special celebration (usually *Dussehrā* or *Pongal*). In some areas, such as Orissa, this *Cāk Pūjā* is performed more often (Plates 2.1 and 2.2).[9] The ceremony begins when the family gathers all the tools in one place (wheels, mallets, anvils, cutting string, incising tools, and compounds used for slipping and painting). If a permanent kiln is used, the tools may be worshipped near it. Then the women in the potter's family, often his daughters, decorate every implement with floral and geometric designs hand-painted with rice-flour paste. A *Brahman* may be asked to perform the ritual; if not, a family *pujārī*, usually an elder who conducts worship, will serve. Helped by the male potters, he cuts up fruit (apples, grapes, and bananas), mixes cooked rice with coconut and sugarcane juice, and places them in baskets and upon banana leaves before the tools. He then lights a clay *dīpa* (lamp) filled with *ghī* and passes it over the tools, before decorating them with flowers (hibiscus and marigolds). Finally, he lights *agarbatti* (incense sticks) and wafts their smoke over the tools. During the entire ritual the *pujārī* chants *ślokas*: prayers to the clay, to the tools, and to the gods that protect the family and ensure its livelihood. When the *ślokas* are finished, he shakes holy water taken from the sacred tank at Bhubaneshwar over each of the tools, whereupon the *prasād* is divided among the family members and the food eaten, bestowing upon each person the blessings of the gods.[10]

By working with the three sacred elements of earth, water, and fire, the Hindu potter is a servant of the gods: He combines earth with water to

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[9] The following describes *Cāk Pūjā* documented in Puri District. See also Chapter Seven, p 428.

[10] In Tamil Nadu potters worship their tools upon several occasions (*Navarātri, Saraswatī Pūjā*, and *Ayudha Pūjā*), while in Orissa they honour them at *Nabanna, Dussehrā*, and *Kurala Panchami* [Behera pp 255, 259, & 263-264], and in Malwa, they worship their wheels at *Divālī* and their paddles and anvils by tying them with sacred thread to new water pots at *Akartij* [Miller *Artefacts As Categories*, p 133].

produce forms that are then strengthened and purified by fire. Fire has been central to Indian religious ritual since the earliest recorded history. Thirty-five hundred years ago, the first Aryans in India prayed and gave offerings to *Agni*, the God of Fire.[11] Potters still continue that tradition in their prayers to *Agni* as they light their kilns. They ask that he cleanse the area of evil spirits and that he protect the objects from cracking or bursting, and also that any burned insects might be released into a better world.[12] Viewed as a furnace in which matter is transmuted from one substance into another, the kiln is respected and feared by other members of the community, and legends abound regarding its powers.[13] The common belief that the firing ground is a place of transmutation is responsible for the occasional self-immolation of abused or wronged women in Tamil Nadu, who gain the stature of goddesses in death (*satī*) and are subsequently worshipped in their communities.[14] In

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[11] The *Vedas* are filled with prayers and references to the worship of *Agni* (e.g. see the invocation to Agni which opens the *Rg. Veda* [1.1.]). *Agni* is "the priest of the gods, as well as the god of the priests; the honoured guest in every home, who by his magical power drives away the demons of darkness(RV., III.20,3) Because he is born anew with every kindling, he is forever young and is thus the bestower of life and of children (I.39, 1).... Being immortal he is able to bestow immortality on his devotees (I.31,7)." [Stutley p 5]. Referring to a contemporary ritual in Kerala which invokes *Agni*, Mookerji [p 34] states: "In the world's oldest surviving ritual, the building of an immense fire altar is called 'the piling up of *Agni*' — *Agni* being both altar and god. *Agni* the god of fire is also identified with the creator-god *Prajāpati*." See also Danielou pp 63-66 & 87-89.

[12] Prayers at kiln firings were recorded in South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, Puri District, Orissa, Bankura District, West Bengal, Deoria and Gorakhpur Districts, Uttar Pradesh, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, Churu District, Rajasthan, and Baroda and Kachch Districts, Gujarat. A direct translation of a potter's prayer at the lighting of a kiln in Rajasthan is as follows: "The secret of firing and the sayings of saints are transmitted from teacher to pupil. The old men set fire to the pile, and if at all their burns any life in the kiln, it will go to the nectar world. The dream and the prayer of *Prahlād* and *Siriyadeva* (personification of the hearth) came true. This is what Guru Gorakhnath spoke to the assembly of many saints [Saraswati p 83]." See also Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay*, p. 18.

[13] Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators*, p 213 & 215] notes that firing grounds are most often placed at the South Indian community's southern edge and are associated with death and misfortune, evil and inauspiciousness. When the potter is firing, community members liken him to the priest of the cremation ground, usually outcaste *Doms* — widely considered India's most most inauspicious and polluted peoples .

[14] Ibid. pp 215 & 219.

Karnataka and Gujarat, the evil eye can be averted by using a pot that has a black spot fired onto one of its sides (Plate 2.3).[15]

Pottery is the barometer of good and evil in the Indian household. Cleansed and made pure by fire, vessels readily absorb negative energy (anger, sorrow, pain, or fear). When they are broken outside the home — especially when immersed in water — that inauspiciousness (: *aśubh*) is dispersed and the family is absolved.[16] Clay in its unfired state is considered *kaccā* : uncooked, impure; once fired, it becomes *pakkā* : cooked, pure. *Kaccā* and *pakkā* are among the most common words in Indian parlance and are used as metaphors for many situations – much as 'black' and 'white' describe various conditions in English. Something that is *pakkā* is superior, dependable: A great man is a *pakkā* sahib; a fired brick house is a *pakkā* bungalow, etc.[17] When *pakkā* pottery has been contaminated, it again

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[15] In North Kanara District, Karnataka, many of the red water and cooking pots have black spots on their sides, in the words of a local potter, in order to: "Keep wrongness at a distance and to keep the household safe." Shah [*Votive Terracottas of Gujarat*, pp 37] recorded: "Jetabhai makes a black mark on all his pots, and while the clay horses are drying he places a burnt cake of cowdung on each of them. This is in order to avert the evil eye. He explains: 'One's attention is drawn to the black portion, which remains unaffected. In this way the pot or horse is protected.' " Archana [p 67] describes the symbolism of the dot in South India: "The dot identified with the benevolent eye is a potent symbol to ward off the evil spirit. The 'drishti' (eyes) of a deity or a supernatural force is of immense importance to the primitive mind. ...It is common to apply a black dot on a child's forehead or cheek to neutralise 'drishti'."

[16] According to Cort ["The Role of the Potter in South Asia", p 168]: "The pot as such is 'invisible', an encasing for its contents, the form of which does not matter. The pot keeps the contents pure by acting as a sort of figurative sponge; any impurity that may threaten the contents is drawn away and discarded when the pot itself is discarded." Raheja [pp 148-149] discusses the use of pottery after a death in Saharanpur District, northwestern Uttar Pradesh, in which all of the inauspiciousness and pollution associated with the death of a local *Gujar* man is dispersed from the household and the community by symbolically placing it in earthenware vessels which are then ritually broken outside the village boundaries.

[17] For further examples of the uses of the *pakkā* and *kaccā* (also spelled in English *pukka*, *pucka*, and *kutcha*, *cutcha*, and in Hindi *Kacchā* and *kachchā*) in common parlance, see: Hobson Jobson pp 287 & 734. Referring to the ways in which these words are used to indicate the relative purity and auspiciousness of various foods and their relationship to social ranking and acceptibity, Maloney [pp 225-226] comments: "Hindu caste ranking across North India (but not so much in the South, Gujarat, or Bangla) is symbolized most precisely by the giving and receiving of three categories of foods: raw, *pakkā*, and *Kaccā*. Raw food, such as grain does not conduct much pollution and can be received by high castes from low castes (except sometimes untouchables). *Pakkā* food is superior because it is purified with the addition of a little *ghī*, or cooked entirely in oil. *Kaccā* food is the coarse daily fare of the majority, generally boiled, without *ghī*, and perhaps hot (medicinally). *Brāhmans* will accept *pakkā* food from a certain range of castes beneath them, but will eat

becomes *kaccā*. Many actions and situations can cause this change, but the most common is contamination through contact with bodily fluids, such as saliva. Thus, as we have seen, vessels used for eating or serving food are discarded.[18] Teacups are thrown away after a single use[19]; water stored in clay vessels is either poured into another vessel for drinking or directly into the mouth without contact with the lips.[20] Menstruating and pregnant women, believed to be unclean, must keep clear of all earthenware; otherwise it must be broken.[21] A disease in the household will pollute all clay vessels and make them *kaccā*, even the slightest contact with an ill person or a *Harijan* will contaminate a pot.[22] Birth, the beginning of puberty, betrothal,

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Kaccā food only if prepared at home. ...Each caste from *Brāhman* down to Watermen can invite all the first 11 castes for feasts; even *Brāhmans* can come because the food is purified with *ghī*. Each of these can dominate 13 castes below those of this bloc by giving them *pakkā* food but refusing to eat the same from their hands, for even *ghī* doesn't purify to this extent. The *Kaccā* food category is even more discriminating. *Brāhmans* can take it only from the hands of other *Brāhmans*, while 22 castes beneath them are in a position to take it from *Brāhmans* who will not, in turn, take it from their hands."

[18] Even though most Indians admit that they prefer the taste of food cooked and water stored in clay pots, many modern Indians, particularly *Brāhmans*, now use metalware or even glazed pottery for these purposes because of the obvious risks of pollution. Metalware does not absorb pollution and can be washed and reused. Attitudes towards glazed pottery vary, depending upon the orthodoxy of the user. *Brāhmans* in some areas still insist on breaking and discarding glazed ware after use. Most Indian Muslims do not believe in the pollution of cooking and eating vessels and do not replace them as frequently as do Hindus.

[19] Just twenty years ago, most cups used for serving tea in *chaikhanas*, *dhābās*, and meals hotels, and at bus and railway stations were terracotta, broken after use. Gradually, they have been replaced by glazed and, frequently, plastic cups which are considered to be *pakkā* even though they more readily pass infections.

[20] Cort "Temple Potters of Puri", p 1. Miller [*Artefacts As Categories*, p 151] noted in the village he documented in Malwa, Madhya Pradesh: "A pot prior to firing may be said to be in a *kaccha* state; after firing it becomes *pakka*. This is significant, since it means that, while the fired pot is stored in the potter's house, other villagers, including low castes, can inspect the pot, which is resistant to pollution. Once the pot has been taken, and is filled with water, it then reverts to a *kaccha* state and is highly susceptible to pollution, so that it is forbidden for most outsiders to approach the water-table area."

[21] In many potters' homes surveyed throughout the subcontinent a separate room or area of the house, or even a separate hut to one side of the compound is reserved for menstruating or pregnant women. The women, who are believed to be ritually unclean, are expected to cook food for themselves in their own earthenware and to generally take care of themselves during their period of confinement. Pottery will be kept by the women to use while isolated every month, but after a pregnancy, all of the pottery used by the pregnant woman is broken.

[22] Miller [*Artefacts As Categories*, p 155] found in Malwa that: "That the untouchable should not touch the earthenware vessel of the higher caste is a basic rule of daily life. A *Brahman* related how he had to put a pot outside in the yard after a weaver woman accidently brushed past it, when his own wife was taking it to the well to fetch water. A potter had recently broken a vessel that had been touched by an untouchable while at a funeral feast. A *jat* woman commented that she would either return a pot that had been

marriage, and death – at every transition period, the household is susceptible to evil spirits that may be absorbed by its earthenware. As a preventive measure, all this pottery is recycled.[23] Terracotta may even be recycled on the successive anniversaries of an important family member's death. The period of mourning after death in most Hindu families is ten days, a time when the spirit of the dead person is believed to be present in transition. On the tenth day, a close family member, usually the eldest son, breaks a pot to symbolically release the soul into its next life.[24] In some areas, such as Orissa, several sets of cooking pots are used and replaced during the mourning period.[25] At any time during the year, Indians may attribute severe personal problems to a *bhūta* (malevolent spirit) of a dead relative, which can be lured by a priest into a clay pot and trapped there by sacred *mantras* (words that act as spells).[26]

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touched by an untouchable to the potter to use as sherds for the firings, or hand it over with abuse to the low-caste person responsible." Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [p 190] noted that earthenware cooking dishes must be replaced in Orissa even if they are touched by men.

[23] The absorptive nature of *kaccā* pottery is believed to draw into itself all of the inauspiciousness associated with the event. When the earthenware is broken, this 'polluted energy' is dispersed. In accordance with this concept, Miller [*Artefacts As Categories,* p 134] quotes a story written by the Tamil writer Ramamirtham: "This is set in South India and tells how a potter couple bore a grudge against the village in which they worked; having prepared the pots for distribution at the South Indian festival of *pongol,* the couple then destroyed them in front of the whole village, leaving the villagers no time to find replacements. The story indicates that the failure to celebrate the festival with appropriate pottery was the cause of the downfall and destruction of the village thereafter."

[24] Behera [p 215] refers to the use of a *dāgadha-handi,* a medium-sized pot, in ceremonies for the dead in Orissa: "On the tenth day, it is burnt in fire near a stream or pond, the place where the outdoor proceedings of the funeral purification rite are being carried out, and when it is quite hot the descendant of the deceased (one who performs the purification rite) breaks it in shoulder-deep water. It is believed that with the breakage of this pot the soul of the deceased leaves this world and makes its way to the other world." Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators,* p 218] remarked: "The life of a pot, whether long or short, inevitably ends with breaking. The broken pot 'dies' and like the body in death pollutes and must be discarded. The breaking of a pot has become directly associated with death in South India. In ceremonies such as a funeral, the water draining from a broken pot is thought of as life draining from the body. An accidentally broken pot causes consternation and evokes feelings of deep forboding."

[25] Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy p 192. A potter in South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, said that he regularly replaces thirty-two types of clay vessels after a death in his village.

[26] Raheja p 61. Pupul Jayakar recorded [p 256] that unfired images of mythical animals are made by shamans in Gujarat in order to exorcize the evil spirits from a patient, drawing a dying person's disease into the figure and thus saving his life. Potters in Rajasthan believe that their gift to make images only exists within their community. If they were to try to

Water completes the pollution/purity cycle in most rituals.[27] Clay made pure by firing and then polluted by the absorption of negativity is once again cleansed when it is thrown away and allowed to dissolve in water (*kaccā* > *pakkā* > *kaccā* > *pakkā*). Water is the dispersing agent. The unwanted energy (evil, inauspiciousness, anger, pain, or fear) absorbed by the terracotta vessel is neutralized in water. The clay returns to its source, the earth, and becomes available once more for transformation by a potter into vessels for sacred or mundane use.[28]

Hindu beliefs are founded upon the principle that everything is in a continuous process of creation, destruction, and re-creation.[29] Clay — with its strength and fragility, purity and susceptibility, sacredness and profanity, and in its constant re-formation — clearly symbolizes this process for the Hindu. The earth used in his vessels and sculptures comes from the ground, which nurtures his crops, from which he builds his home, in which the bones and ashes of his ancestors are mixed, and which will also receive the remains

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sculpt outside the village boundaries, the sculpture would crack and break [Harmalkar p 12].

[27] Although referring specifically just to pottery, when the analogy could equally apply to clay sculpture, Cort [p168] sums up the whole pollution/purity cycle within terracotta: "The life cycle of the pot has specific analogies to the human life cycle. A human experiences a lifelong cycle alternating between states of being purified and being polluted. The pot endures only a single cycle, but it occurs in two phases. When the potter digs the earth, tramples it with his feet, and manipulates it with water by throwing, the pot is formed and exists in a polluted state. Then the potter fires the pot, and it emerges from the kiln purified. Once the pot is put to use, it is polluted by that action, and it is finally discarded on a specially designated rubbish heap or, ideally, in the ritual context, washed away in flowing water. I see here an analogy between the two-stage life cycle of the pot and the life cycle of the 'twice-born'"

[28] Water played an important role in most, but not all, of the rituals documented for this thesis. In most cases the ritual terracotta, particularly if it was considered to be the receptacle of divine energy, was placed in water at the ceremony's end, having absolved through absorption the problems of the devotees. Thus images of the goddess *Gaurī* were thrown in the community tank or well as the last act of the *Gaṅgaur* Festival in Rajasthan; sculptures of *Gaṇeśa* were thrown in the river at the end of *Gaṇeśapūjā* in Maharashtra; when *Saraswatīpūjā* was finished in Bengal sculptures of her were immersed in the Hooghly; and mud images of *Sūrya* were discarded in the Ganga in Bihar as the last act of *Chhattha*. Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [p 190] observed that among the ritually orthodox *Brāhmans* of Orissa, however, newly fired terracotta pots are regarded as polluted even if dipped in water by a potter to test their watertightness.

[29] Innumerable references exist to substantiate this concept, e.g. see Zaehner pp 38-44 & 61-62, Lannoy pp 283-286, Danielou pp 190-194 & 240-249.

of his body, his house, and everything he knows, to be reborn again and again for eternity.

Potters in India inspire awe and anxiety. They handle dangerous elements (fire and impure earth), in the process creating items of beauty, spirit, and utility. This metamorphosis of clay into finished product is regarded as hazardous, radiating into the potter himself some of the pollution he is removing.[30] For this reason, he is *Śūdra*, lower caste, considered by orthodox upper castes to be unclean.[31] He is also, however, respected almost as a magician, since he works with powers granted him by the gods. In many Hindu societies, potters even act as priests or mediums for the gods, further calling into question the normal inferences of a low-caste position. The village potters of Tamil Nadu go into trance on special festival days to become mouthpieces for the gods, instructing individuals and their communities on matters of concern.[32] They may prove their special gifts by acts of faith such

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[30] "The role of the potter is dangerous and involves ritual pollution. As every birth and renewal is considered painful and vulnerable to evil so is the creativity which underlies the craft. The remains of past creations are the raw materials of new creations and the taint of previous destruction lingers. The potter moves on the boundary between raw materials and essential products, and more importantly along the boundary between the chaos of the unformed and deteriorating and the control of the useful and vital. His craft demands that he constantly pass between." [*Creators and Consecrators,* p 8] " Pots are in a sense dedicated to their own destruction, in that this destruction is as important a part of their ritual meaning as their consecration. The *Velar* [potter] constantly works with the refuse of previous creations. Like the deities he serves, the *Velar* moves back and forth between the chaos of the unformed and the order of the complete and useful. The ambiguous social status of the *Velar* lies not in their lack of contact with sacred power but in that they are in constant contact. Like their ancestor *Brahma,* the *Velar* 'make and break things every day'" [ibid. p 220] "Thus the *Velar,* through his craft, is symbolically standing astride a boundary, not only between human and divine as a mediator in image making and worship but also between life and death. Involvement in the creative cycle means that impurity is inevitable [ibid. p 276]."

[31] Hindu hierarchy indisputably places potters (Kumbhāras) in the *śūdra varṇa.* The *Manu Samhita* X.100 prescribes that all *śūdras* occupy themselves with practical occupations such as craftsmanship, among that being pottery-making, and subsequent scriptures always assign *Kumbhāras* and pottery making to this *varṇa.* [See Saraswati pp 47-50.]

[32] Chapter Five focuses in detail upon the sacred roles of Tamil potters. Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators,* p 7], referring to his documentation of Tamil potter-priests, commented: "It is the ability of the potter to work closely with the ever-recurring process of creativity that enables him to approach the dangerous deities most important for fertility, health, and life itself. In the most intense expression of this extraordinary relationship, the potter may periodically become, like the pots and images he creates, a container for the deity. His own body, prepared, dressed, and consecrated, becomes like his work of earthenware, the temporary locus of divine power and a further expression of his creative skill." Miller

as firewalking.[33] Out of respect for their socio-religious position in the community, the potters of western Gujarat are addressed as *Bhagat* (pious man).[34] In Maharashtra, they perform funeral rites and are priests of the goddess *Śītalā*, who is worshipped to cure smallpox.[35] In villages throughout India, potters play essential roles in many local rituals and festivals.[36] Everywhere they are treated with care: Angering a potter or his wife might bring bad luck. His position as intermediary with spirits and gods gives him an indefinable power in traditional societies.[37]

Besides providing the sacred vessels essential to every Hindu wedding, potters in rural North India are indispensable to part of the ceremony. In a ritual also called *Cãk Pūjā*, documented in Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh, a young bride visits the potter's home, accompanied in procession by the other women of her family and female friends from the village (although in some

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[*Artefacts As Categories,* p 122] further states that potters are unusual in India in that they observe rituals concerning all the levels of deities in the pantheon. They are not restricted by their own *jāti* to worship or handle only certain deities.

[33]Vaithyalinga Pathar, the potter surveyed in Chapter Five, annually traversed barefoot a large bed of red hot coals to prove his unquestioning devotion to his gods. For references to this practice, see Inglis *Creators and Consecrators,* p 296 and Archana p 21.

[34] Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work,* p 118.

[35] Making a similar observation,Saraswati [p 82] wrote: "In Maharashtra, the *Dhangars* employ *Kumbhar* priests to perform funeral rights. This is called *Kumbharkriya.* The potters are the official priests of *Sheetalamata.* Whenever the small-pox epidemic breaks out in a village, they are approached to propitiate the deity. The potter's donkeys, believed to be the sacred vehicle of *Sheetala,* are fed sweets. This is a widely prevalent custom." Miller [*Artefacts As Categories,* p 122] documented a similar sacred role of potters at *Śītalā*'s shrine in Malwa. See also Ray pp 32-32, Dimock, pp 184-204, and Wadley "Śītalā: The Cool One" pp 33-62.

[36] Detailed descriptions of many of these roles are given in Chapter Four. Miller [*Artefacts As Categories,* p 88] comments: " A variety of obligations other than the provision of pottery has accrued to the potters, although they are mainly obvious extensions of that role. ...It is considered extremely courteous, when an important guest arrives, to have the potter come and present a *kalash,* and assist in serving the meal. Potters help arrange ordinary *puja* (prayers) and *yagna* (sacrifices), for example, placing the red *tilak* mark of the foreheads of those attending, or distributing *prasad* (sweets previously offered to the deity). They may assist at a social party, serving food and water. ... They may have special tasks at festivals related to *Shitala Mata* (the goddess of small-pox) or the elephant-headed god *Ganesh,* with whom the potters are particularly associated."

[37] Potters in Madhya Pradesh claimed that local villagers regularly come to them for cures from disease and to be exorcized of evil spells. In some Indian societies, an enemy is believed to be guarantied bad luck if a potter may be persuaded to throw a clay *dīpā* (lamp) by turning the wheel clockwise (opposite from the standard 'god-given' direction). This *dīpā* is then lighted on a new moon ceremony in which the enemy is named and his future is damned. [Saraswati pp 84-85.]

cases the potter might take his wheel to the bride's parents' house). There she worships the wheel for fertility and for success in her new home (Plates 2.4, 2.5, & 2.6).[38] As the potter holds the wheel steady, the bride, followed by her mother and her female relatives, draws sacred symbols (*swastika*, the letter *om*, the *triśūla*) upon it with rice powder, turmeric, and *rolī* (a local vermilion), placing with them offerings of grain, five, seven, or eleven *gulgulās* (sweets), and money (one rupee notes, five rupee notes, and paise coins). The potter, who keeps the money as his reward, then turns the wheel anticlockwise to ensure a fortunate marriage.[39] Then the whole assembly breaks into song and dance.[40] In some communities the bride may even be seated upon the wheel, which the potter then rotates seven times for good luck.[41] The potter's wife presents the bride with seven painted pots (symbolizing the seven sacred seas) for use in the concluding wedding ceremony (Plate 2.7).[42]

"Within this earthen vessel are bowers and groves,

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[38] Saraswati [p 89] noted: "The wheel-worship at a wedding may also symbolise a fertility rite which has its origins in a kind of belief in productive or sympathetic magic. The generative spirit (energy) of the wheel may be efficacious in promoting a corporal union between the husband and the wife, aiding their productive capabilities. It involves the principle of sympathetic magic according to which an object can influence other objects similar to it." Crooke [p 331] commented that a deformed child born after *Cak Pūjā* is performed is regarded as the fault of potter's. Miller [*Artefacts As Categories*, p 125] documented in detail the ritual of *Cak Pūjā* during a wedding ceremony in Malwa, Madhya Pradesh. See also Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay*, p 22.

[39] One of the participants commented: "Potters are *purohits* in this ceremony".

[40] The songs are generally not religious, but rather abusive songs chastising the lower castemen of the village (*Camārs*, barbers, and *Kumbhāras*) in order to remove inauspiciousness from the ceremony and the marriage, although the interviewed subjects of these songs claimed that they were not offended.

[41] Documented by Russell and Hira Lal [Vol. 4, p 6] in Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. See also Saraswati p 82. This action of not only touching, but actually sitting on the wheel by a woman does not appear to pollute her in this circumstance. Rather by turning her opposite to the correct direction of the wheel (and the mythical direction of the *Viṣṇu*'s *cakra*) the potter is believed to avert inauspiciousness.

[42] Ibid., p. 82. At a wedding in Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh, the potter made a small round pot and several tiny ones and a crude, unfired image of *Gaṇeśa*, all of which he places inside a medium-sized water pot. After the *Cak Pūjā* he gave this to the mother of the bride who received it in her *sāṛī* so as not to pollute it or herself, and took it home to install in her house shrine for a year after the wedding in the belief that this would further insure that her daughter would bear a child in that time. Unfired clay fertility figures are given to the bride as part of wedding ceremonies in many areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Their forms, sculpted by the potter on commission, depend upon the specific tradition of the bride's family. In Deoria District the bride's mother was given a phallic image of *Balabādra*, a family deity, decorated with *reni* and barley seeds (see Plate 6.15).

and within it is the Creator.
Within this vessel are the seven oceans
and the unnumbered stars.
The touchstone and the jewel appraiser are within;
and within this vessel the Eternal soundeth,
and the spring wells up.
Kabir says: "Listen to me my friend,
my beloved Lord is within."[43]

Pots are used to define sacred space in India, and they represent the gods in many ceremonies.[44] The *ghaṭa-sthāpana* (installation of a vessel) is the minimum requirement before ritual worship of a deity may begin.[45] Usually this *ghaṭa* is terracotta, although it may be made of brass or silver. Unadorned, of simple red clay, it becomes the focus of ritual prayer. The god or goddess is invited to descend into the vessel for the duration of the ceremony and the clay is permeated by the spiritual presence of that deity.[46] Ancient scriptures refer to the transformation of earthen pots into gods.[47] Most often,

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[43] Tagore, Rabindranath, trans. *Songs of Kabir,* New Delhi: Cosmo, 1985.
[44] According to Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators,* p 156]: "Pots are not only containers of food and water, but also of the divine presence of local deities. Clay vessels are appropriate for all these purposes because they are formed of the earth of the area in which they are used and in which the crops are grown." See also Whitehead, p 103.
[45] Ray p 23.
[46] Mookerji [p 63] states further: "No ritual worship can start without the establishment of a *ghaṭa,* the ceremonial jar of earthenware or metal in front of the deity's pedestal. When the divinity underlying the universe is invited to descend into the sacred water contained in the vessel, the vessel becomes a powerful means of contact between the *sādhaka* (devotee) and the cosmos. The jar itself becomes a living entity by being ritually established (*ghaṭa sthāpana*) on a lump of clay forming a pedestal, or on a rice paste drawing, or on a coloured powder *maṇḍala* diagram." The emptying of the sacred vessel concludes its ceremonial use and the return of the spirit. It contents, according to Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators,* pp 185-186], "imbued with the presence of the deity, may be poured over a renovated image as an expression of the return of the deity to its permanent locus. It may be distributed by being poured onto the earth or into a body of water by which its efficacy becomes distributed to those who use these resources. In a more direct transfer between deity and devotee the potent contents of a ceremonial pot may be sprinkled over a worshipping crowd, each person pressing forward to catch a few drops. If the pot contains food, it may be eaten by devotees who then share in the residue of its power."
[47] For examples, see *Rg. Veda* 1.160.1 and Goudriaan *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom (Kāśyapa-Jñānkāṇḍaḥ),* Chapter 64: "The Worship in the Pot and Other Ceremonies" pp 183-187. In particular, Kāśyapa says: "The teacher sitting with his face towards the N. should mutter the *ātmasūkta*; lay down (by way of meditation) in his heart the *praṇava* (the syllable *om*) and the basic syllable; meditate on a diagram of *Varuṇa* as being in the water of the pot; lay down in its middle the original syllable, which is the highest, the cause of all things, consisting of *Brahman* and golden of colour; surround it with *pranavas* and, knowing the Inner Self, being absorbed in meditation, he should meditate on the Highest Self which is without qualities, indivisible, and pervading everything, as being in his own heart; invoke It from there into the water which is in that pot and create by meditation in a devoted way Its divisible aspect which is golden of colour, has red mouth, eyes, hands and feet, wears a yellow garment, is provided with a crown, necklace, bracelets, breast-string and sacred

pots are symbols of the Mother Goddess.[48] For example, in Bengal, earthen vessels are painted with images of the goddess *Lakṣmī* and worshipped on the full-moon night following the *Durgāpūjā* festival.[49] After this ceremony, they are preserved on altars inside the devotees' homes. According to a Bengali proverb, the pot represents the entire universe.[50]

The *kalaśa*, the most widely accepted form of vessel used to embody the gods in India, is shaped as a simple water pot with a rounded body and an indented, curved lip.[51] The *kalaśa* usually is undecorated, although the Sanskrit *mantra 'Om'* may be painted upon its side. It contains holy water and occasionally curds (yoghurt) and *ghī,* and in most rituals its opening is covered with sacred leaves (*aśoka*, mango, or plum) and/or grasses surmounted by a ripe coconut.[52] The *kalaśa* has been essential to Hindu

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thread, bearing the conch and the disk, four-armed, furnished with the *Śrīvatsa* and the *praṇava* as Its Self. ... If the two goddesses are present, he should invoke them together with the Lord of gods into that pot, and meditate in the same way on their respective forms [pp 184-185]."

[48] For *Sanskrit* textual sources identifying the pot as symbol of the Mother Goddess, see Biardeau p 53 and Kosambi pp 70-73. Many references also exist comparing pots to women, particularly to the womb, as in Inglis pp 188-191, Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 139, Jayakar p 20, Crooke pp 88-89, and Shah *Form And Many Forms of Mother Clay,* p 10 &16-17.

[49] Bean [p 30] refers to deities inhabiting clay images in a similar way.

[50] Mookerji p 57.

[51] Cort [*The Role of the Potter in South Asia,* p 167] calls the *Kalaśa*, otherwise known as the *pūrṇa kumbha*, the archetypal pot. Stutley [p 136] says: "In ancient India the *kalaśa* symbolized the universe, and in later times, when the theory of the *maṇḍala* was established, 'the vase remained as an integral part of *maṇḍalic* liturgy, in the same way as it still forms an indispensable element of certain *pūjā* of Hinduism ...(hence the) vase is the first *maṇḍala* into which the deities descend and arrange themselves.' [Tucci, Tibetan Painted Scrolls, I, p 327, n 33] Thus *Brahma* holds the 'Wisdom Vase', which symbolizes the earth and is the container and the sustainer of all things. The notion of fecundity, prosperity and wealth was symbolized by the *kumbha*..."

[52] See Behura p 214. Refering to *kalaśas* in Tamil Nadu, Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators,* p 184] comments: "The pot which is to become the container of a deity's presence is most often decorated or dressed in a way similar to an image. It is placed on a bed of raw grains, decorated with auspicious markings of turmeric paste, vermilion and ash, tied in protective nets of string, dressed in new cloth, coiled with green leaves and sealed with a coconut." Ray [p 46] describes a *kalaśa* in Bengal: "A theory of cosmogony ...is still expressed by setting up an earthen pitcher (pot) which is filled with water. On the top of the pitcher a green coconut is placed on a mango twig. It symbolizes the earth containing water (ocean) and vegetation. At the four corners of the pitcher four bamboo posts, each having a V-shaped palm-leaf cap, are planted. The pillars are then surrounded by red threads which form a square around the pitcher. The sun, the moon and the stars made of *sola* (pith) hang above the pillars. The four cardinal points are marked by the pillars on which the sky with its stars, the sun and the moon rests." Courtright [p 42] describes a *kalaśa* used in *Gaṇeśapūjā* in Maharashtra

rituals for thousands of years as a symbol of hope, representing fertility, creativity, prosperity, and wealth.[53] When *kalaśas*, the focal points of many social and seasonal ceremonies, are placed outside homes and temples, they symbolise welcome both to visitors and to benevolent spirits and are particularly auspicious (*śubh*) for Hindu marriages (Plate 2.8).[54]

A sacred fire is lighted at the centre of every Hindu wedding. A *kalaśa* standing before this flame signifies a healthy union and prosperous regeneration. Pots are placed at each of the four corners surrounding the sacrificial fire to demarcate the square in which the bride and groom are married.[55] These vessels symbolize the deities of the four directions: north, south, east, and west, and also the four basic elements: earth, fire, wind, and water;[56] the space within them is a temple, protected and sanctified.[57] In

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and the *ślokas* chanted by the *Brāhman purohit* regarding this vessel: "The water vessel (*kalaśa*), whose contents will bathe and nourish *Ganeśa* during the ceremony, is identified with the pitcher of the *Vedic* sacrifice (*Ṛg. Veda* 9.17.4) and becomes symbolically transformed into the cosmos itself. The priest recites: '*Viṣṇu* rides at the mouth of the pitcher, *Rudra* in the throat, *Brahma* at its base, and the group of mother goddesses in the middle. All oceans and the earth with its seven continents reside in its interior. The *Ṛg Veda, Sāma Veda, Yajur Veda,* and the *Atharva Veda,* along with the appended texts (*vedāṅgas*) dwell in the vessel. In it resides the *gāyatrī* chant with *Savitṛ* as its deity, which brings peace, prosperity. May those who remove all sins come here fro the worship of this deity. O *Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Indus,* and *Kāverī* rivers, come and be present in this water.' "

[53] Stressing the importance of *kalaśas* throughout Indian history, Miller [*Artefacts As Categories,* p 144] states that the *kalaśa* was used to carry *soma,* that sacred ingredient essential to *Vedic* rituals, while texts dating from the sixth to the second centuries B.C. refer to the *kalaśa* as both a ceremonial and utilitarian vessel.

[54] As a part of this thesis research, terracotta *kalaśas* were observed to be a pan-Indian phenomena, documented in use in every state. The vase-shaped finial of many classical Hindu temples is also referred to as a *kalaśa* and believed to symbolize the abode of the gods. Kramrisch [p 350] states: "In the vase (*kalaśa, kumbha*) of the finial (*stūpikā*) are collected (from the root '*stup*' to collect) all the properties of all the objects and their potencies and merged in *amṛta,* the deathless."

[55] "Pottery is not only extremely common in ceremonies but is also of some significance. It may represent major figures in the rites, it may constitute the space in which the rites take place, its absence may be regarded as a failure to have carried out the festival in the proper manner, and it may even come to stand for the wedding itself [Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 135]."

[56] Inglis *Creators and Consecrators,* p. 217. In Madurai District, Tamil Nadu, Stephen Inglis [ibid. p 183] discovered that: "The deities are worshipped as a series of clay pots placed around the center of ritual activity. For very formal and elaborate ceremonies, these pots number 108..., but more often, as at marriages, a smaller number of vessels prescribed by a particular caste or community convention becomes identified with all the deities (eg. the 330 million gods before whom the marriage necklace, *thali,* is tied at a *Brāhman* wedding (Thurston 1909:194). Pots demarcate a sacred space, one at each of four corners and four sides representing the eight guardians of the cosmos."

most weddings, the pots are painted with bright, water-based colours that wear off after the ceremony[58] (Plates 2.9 & 2.10). In some parts of South Asia (such as in Puri District, Orissa), only one vessel is used in each corner; in western India, large stacks of these *cauri*, each smaller than the one below it, represent the four directions (in Gujarat, as many as thirty-six pots may be used, nine stacked in each corner)[59] (Plate 2.11).Contained within these vessels are offerings sacred to the ceremony: holy water, *ghī,* valuable oils, rice, grains, and sometimes precious minerals and/or money.[60] Indian marriage rites are long, usually occurring over several days. In some functions, earthen pots may even be used as stand-ins for the bride and groom.[61] Created as a part of prayers by craftsmen who are themselves servants of the gods, these clay vessels are *pakkā.* They are absorptive, drawing into themselves not only the power of the gods but also all of the sacred energy generated by the elaborate rituals of the wedding. Radiating this energy, they sanctify and validate the ceremony. Their form, function, and spirit descend directly from those first vessels commissioned by the gods and made by *Prajāpati,* Lord of Creativity.

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[57] Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 135.
[58] Marriage vessels painted in ephemeral designs were documented in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
[59] For a detailed description of a Saurashtran village wedding and the types and meanings of terracotta vessels used, see Fischer and Shah *Rural Craftsman and Their Work,* p 121-124. A descriptive list of all the earthenware vessels used in Orissan weddings may be found in Behera pp 213-214, and in Malwa weddings in Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* pp 127-131.
[60] Gloria Raheja [pp 103-104] has enumerated the contents of these pots in a village ceremony in northwestern Uttar Pradesh and the symbolic attributes given to them by the officiating *Brāhman.*
[61] Miller *Artefacts As Categories,* p 145.

Plate 2.1) In Orissa, *Cak Pūjā* begins when the women in each potter's family decorate his wheel, mallets, anvils, and other tools with rice-paste designs. (Balikondalo, Puri District, Orissa)

Plate 2.2) While chanting *ślokas*, a *Brāhman* priest officiates at the offerings of flowers, fruits, incense, camphor, and oil lamps to the wheel and other tools during *Cak Pūjā* in Balikondalo, Puri District, Orissa.

Plate 2.3) A woman in North Kanara District, Karnataka, carries home from the market a large water storage pot whose sides have been fired with black spots intended to ward off evil and contamination.

Plate 2.4) At a wedding *Cak Pūjā* in Mundera, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh, the sisters of the bride place sacred symbols in powdered dyes upon the potter's wheel (held by the potter, Ram Dhari, at right).

Plate 2.5) As part of the wedding *Cak Pūjā* the mother of the bride (shown here in green) places offerings of rupees upon the wheel. (Mundera, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh)

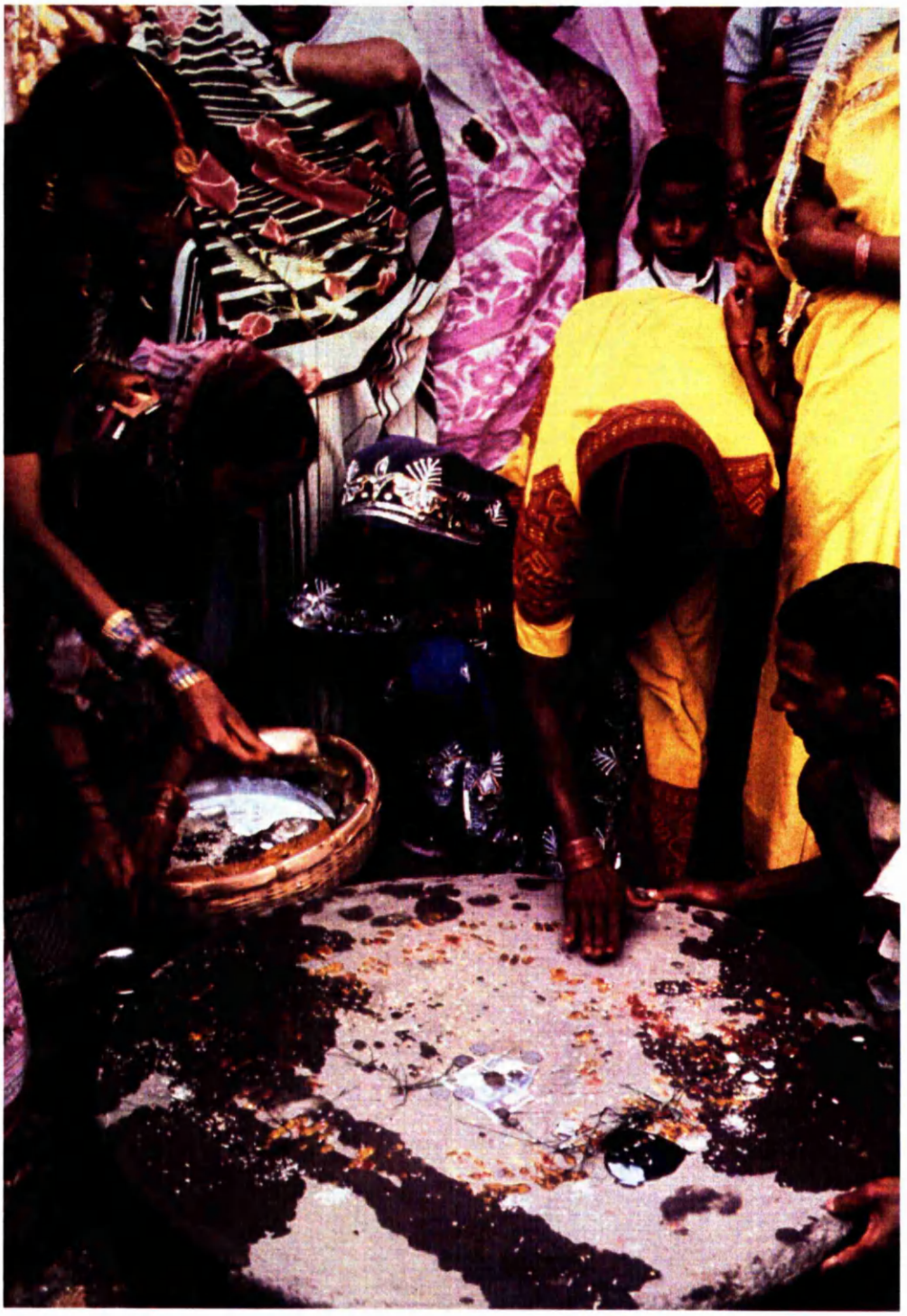

Plate 2.6) Each female member of the wedding party worships and leaves her hand print on the wheel (the bride is dressed in blue) (*Cak Pūjā*, Mundera, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh).

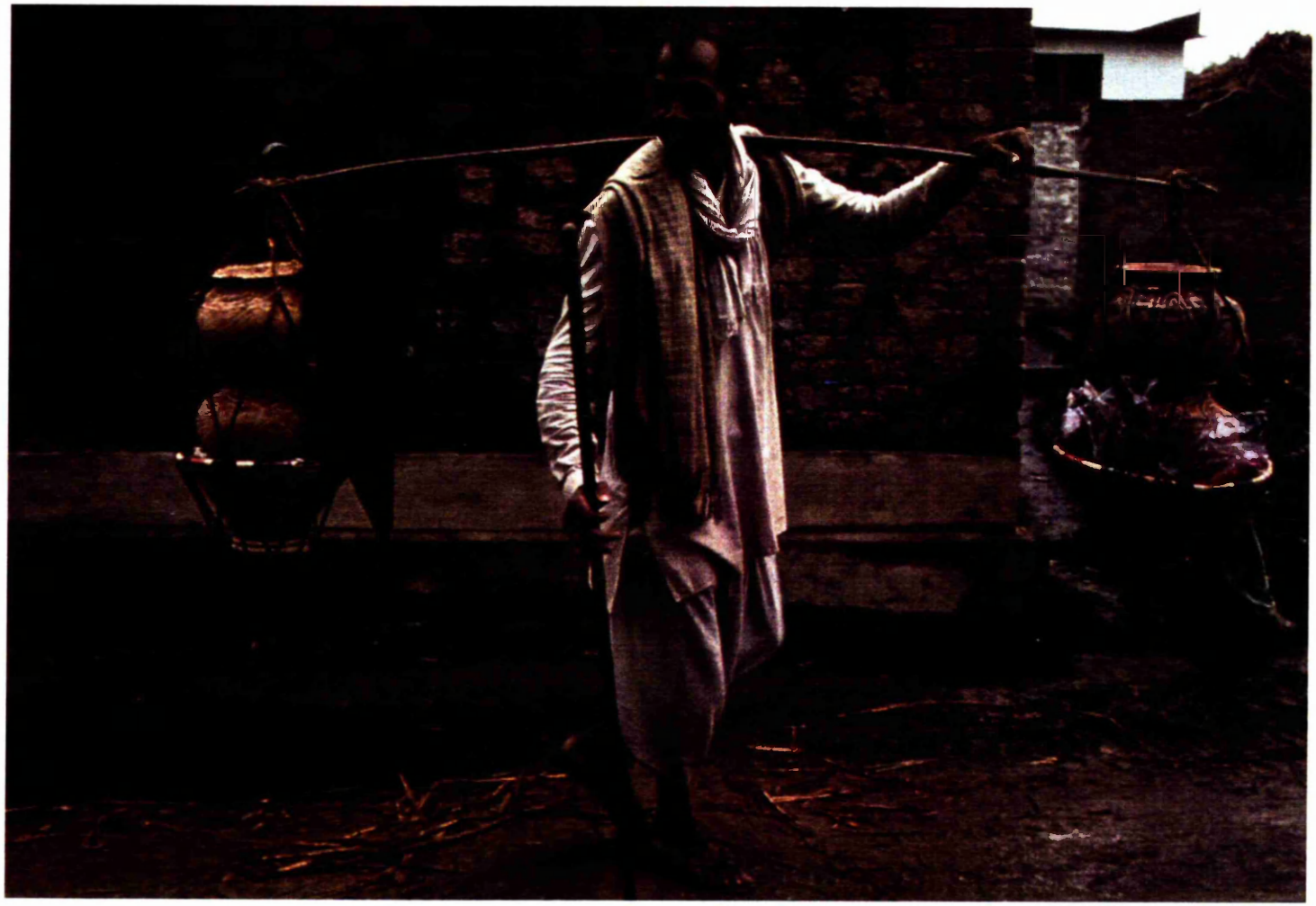

Plate 2.7) Dowry and wedding gifts may be carried to the bride's home in vessels specially painted in festive motifs (Bhitauli, Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh).

Plate 2.8) Brightly painted *kalaśas* stand alongside the bride and groom at a Tamil wedding in Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District.

Plate 2.9) Kalaśas painted with rice paste designs and filled with gifts for Durgā on Dhola Pūrṇima (Puri District, Orissa)

Plate 2.10) A vessel being decorated with water-soluable paints for use in a wedding ceremony in Gudithangicavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

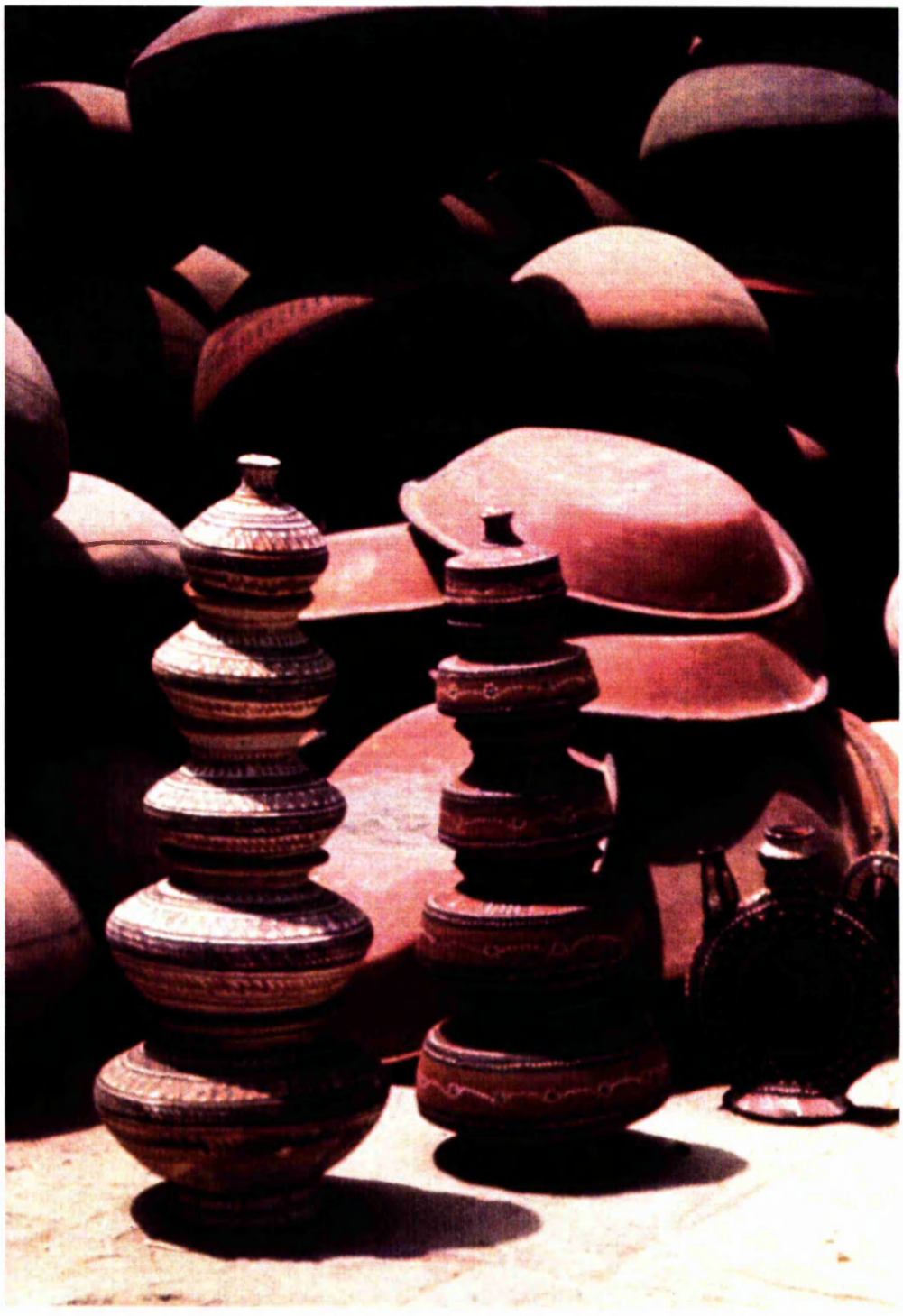

Plate 2.11) Stacks of two types of *cauri* and a *ṣurāḥī* (ceremonial ewer) commissioned for a wedding stand ready to be picked up at a potter's house in Jamburi, Kutch, Gujarat.

CHAPTER THREE
GIFT-GIVING: TERRACOTTAS AS GIFTS TO THE GODS IN TEMPLE, SHRINE AND HOUSEHOLD

> Thou art everywhere, but I worship you here;
> Thou art without form, but I worship you in these forms;
> Thou needest no praise, yet I offer you these prayers and salutations.
>
> — Hindu Prayer[1]

Gods in India are worshipped in myriad ways and in myriad forms and aspects. Most beliefs regarding these gods have enough in common despite their differences to draw them together under the broad religious umbrella of Hinduism. Unlike the Indian adherents of monotheistic religions (Muslims, Christians, and Jews), each Hindu community and each group of people within that community has its own way of viewing the cosmos and the powers that govern it and their lives. Tradition and environment have engendered a variety of individual attitudes and customs. Hinduism allows each person to choose which gods or goddesses to worship based upon hereditary preference, popular belief, and personal experience. That choice is subjective, even within the family, often resulting in the worship of separate deities by different family members.[2]

Each of India's tens of thousands of towns and cities and more than six hundred thousand villages[3] has its own special patron god or goddess, the deity whose very presence is viewed as the community itself, and upon whose

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[1] Hazelden p 10.18.

[2] Many of the subjects interviewed professed devotion to deities different from those of other members of their families. In this way in a village in Puri District, Orissa, the chief male potter and one of his sons made regular pūjā to *Rudrapāl*, their ancestor deity, the potter's wife worshipped *Lakṣmī*, her widowed mother-in-law focused her attention on *Kṛṣṇa* and *Rādhā*, a daughter prayed regularly to *Hanuman*, and a second son, who had spent some time living in in a large town, was agnostic.

[3] 1991 Census of India, according to *India Abroad*, Vol XXI, No 28, Friday, April 12, 1991, p 1.

approval the daily life, continuity, and future depend (Plate 3.1). Some of these *grāmadevatā*, or local deities,[4] are believed to be benevolent, others vindictive, but all must be placated regularly with worship and offerings to ensure a protected existence. It is a commonly held belief that a calamity such as an epidemic or a flood is the direct result of the local deity's wrath, incurred through neglect.[5] Each Indian's calendar is filled with festivals and holy days that revolve around cyclical observances of specific rituals designed to maintain the gods' good humour.[6] For example, in the fields outside a small

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[4] Discussing the nature of these tutelary deities, Nagaswamy ["Village Gods" p 5] wrote: "The village temples of India owe their origin to tribal beliefs in the various manifestations of the spirit of nature, their malevolent and benevolent aspects and the belief in divinity in everything. The trees, the rivers, the mountains, the tanks, the sea, the lightning, the wind, etc. have gradually grown into the making of the village temples. The fertility cult so widely prevalent through the ancient world, and the faith in the Mother Goddess, led to the personification of each and every village settlement as a *grama devata*, i.e., the village Goddess. Early inscriptions refer to the personified deity of the city of Pushkalaavati as the *Pushkalavati devata*. Similarly the city of Madurai was personified as *Madhurapuri devata* in ancient Tamil literature. The port city of Kaveripumpattinam was called Campapthi and the personified spirit of this city was worshipped as *Campapati devata* and similarly the city of Kanchi had *Kanchipuri devata*, who is *Kamakshi*. As in these illustrious cases, each and every village had its own personified deity called the *grama devata*, who protects the villagers, decides their fate, and guides them like a fond mother." According to Stutley [p 104] *grāmadevatās* are "minor powers or tutelary goddesses (*devatās*) of villages (*grāmas*). Their association with the water jar or pot (a symbol of the womb) indicates a close association with the ubiquitous fertility cult. Thus they are often represented by a jar or pot." Commenting further, Kinsley [p 198] stated: "One of the most persisitent themes found in the myth, cult, and worship of village goddesses is their being rooted in specific, local villages. The village is the special place of the deity. She is the mother or mistress of the village, as suggested by a name popular in the South, *Amman*, meaning 'mother, mistress, or lady.' Although it is common to speak of the goddess as such-and-such a village, it is probably more accurate to think of the village as belonging to the goddess. Theologically the village goddess predates the village. She created it. As its center and source she is often associated with a 'navel stone' located somewhere in the village. Sometimes she is represented only by a head placed directly on the ground. This may suggest that her body is the village itself, that she is rooted in the soil of the village. The village and the villagers might be understood as living within or upon the body of the village goddess. The close identity of the goddess with her village is also seen in her role as guardian of the village boundaries." See also Tiwari, J.N., pp 32-40.

[5] "In return for the worship of the villagers, the goddess ensures good crops, timely rain, fertility, and protection from demons, diseases, and untimely death [Kinsley p 200]." "Many of the village goddesses are specifically associated with diseases, and during epidemics they may play several apparently contradictory roles. They may defend the village from disease, which may be identified with invading demons. They may be identified with the disease itself. Or they may be cast in the dual role of inflicter of the disease and protector from the disease [ibid p 204]."

[6] Unlike contemporary festivals, most of which are held at fixed times of the year, Kinsley [pp 204-205] finds that: "Traditionally, village-goddess festivals were only held and the goddesses were only worshiped when some disaster, usually an epidemic, struck the village. Such disasters are taken to represent either the presence of demons in the village because the goddess's defences have broken down or the anger of the awakened goddess, who is demanding worship by punishing her people for neglecting her so long." See also Brubaker

village in the Gangetic Plain, abstract votive terracottas are given to the local god *Dī-Bābā*[7], who is worshipped by farmers at each seasonal phase: before tilling, planting, irrigating, harvesting, and threshing, and again when the first new food is eaten (Plate 3.2). The god's blessing is required to ensure that the crop will be healthy. Drought, such as that which plagued India in the late 1980s, is believed to be a direct result of insincerity and a lack of diligence on the part of the devotees.[8] In response, rituals are intensified. Similarly, in South India, the wrath of the goddess, *Mārīammān*, who inflicts epidemics and disease, is appeased by the sacrifice of chickens or goats before her altar. When the goddess is happy, the whole village can rejoice.[9] The cyclical renewal of religious rituals maintains a complementary balance in the relationship between devotee and deity. The worshipper, through prayer,

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pp 146-148. For detailed descriptions of Indian festivals and holy days, see Sharma, B.N *Festivals of India* and Raghavan, V. *Festivals, Sports and Pastimes of India*; and for documentation of festivals and holy days and their effects in one village, see Wadley *Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion*, pp 210-212.

[7] The local farmer interviewed in Vikrampur, Varanasi District, Uttar Pradesh, claimed that *Dī-Bābā* was a *Śaivite* god, although the same name is used for deities in other nearby shrines whose devotees claimed no similar affiliation.

[8] Villagers remarked that they had not properly performed the *pūjā* in the previous year; that the *ślokas* were not correctly intoned; and that the offerings were not of the type and number that the god preferred.

[9] As part of this survey, many shrines to *Mārīammā* were documented in Tamil Nadu in which terracottas had been given as part of rites to propitiate the goddess' wrath. In one such shrine in Vandīpalliam, South Arcot District, terracotta images representing diseased children were placed in wooden cradles and suspended from a *nim* tree dedicated to her worship (a photograph of this shrine, although incorrectly labelled, is published in Huyler *Village India*, p 112). Pupul Jayakar [p 241] remarked "*Mārīamma*, the goddess of small-pox, claims descent from *Bhagavan*, the *Āyra*, the northern stranger, who impregnated Adi, the dark *Pariah* girl of luminous beauty, and of this union was born *Mārīamma*, the mighty goddess of the Tamil countryside. *Mārīamma*, the *Mahāmārī* of the *Purāṇas*, has her counterpart in the northern river valleys where the goddess of destruction is *Māria*, while in Maharashtra she is *Mārī Ayi*. The home of *Mārīamma*, the red lotus lady of Tamil Nadu is the neem tree. She is also found on cross-roads, in fire and on burial grounds. ...Her stone image never leaves her temples. But at the time of her festival a procession image is carved in the wood of the neem tree or moulded into shape by the potter and carried by the magician priest as he dances among the devotees." Archana [p 20] states further: "*Mārīammā* is a popular tutelary deity found usually on the outskirts of the villages of Tamil Nadu. Apart from inflicting and curing pox and other contagious diseases, she also has the power of restoring eyesight. She is supposed to have a thousand eyes (*Ayiram Kannudayai*). Sometimes a small lamp is lit inside the *Ayiramkanni* pot and along with other offerings placed in the corner of the shrine. *Mārīammān* is of a vindictive nature. She sometimes has to be appeased from time to time. She is particularly propitiated in the hot summer months when the rains are prayed for. This period is considered highly inauspicious and the cause of various diseases like small-pox, chicken-pox, measles, etc." See also Brubaker p 146 and Kinsley pp 200-201.

praise, and gifts, enhances a god's prestige on the spiritual plane, while the god, in turn, through compassion, eases the temporal life of the Hindu.

This exchange of services and gifts is pivotal to Indian culture. Ancient Hindu texts extol *dāna* (giving to others) as one of humankind's most important ethics.[10] The economy and equilibrium of traditional India were based upon this principle, focused within the *jajmānī* system, as described in Chapter One. At its simplest, landowner patrons share their excess lands, crops, and trade goods with tenants and those who perform services for them, while these villagers offer the landowners the products of their labour and craftsmanship.[11] But inherent in the *jajmānī* system is a reciprocity of gift-giving and special services without which Hindu society could not function.[12] For example, in northeastern India a low-caste potter not only makes the vessels for the kitchen of the village *Brāhman* and the clay sculptures for his seasonal offerings to the village goddess, but he also plays an indispensable

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[10] According to the *Laws of Manu* [1:86-91], mankind's primary duties in the first three ages (*yugas*) were, consecutively, the performance of austerities, the seeking of knowledge, and the making of sacrifices. But in our present age, the fourth *yuga*, the giving of *dāna* is most important. *Manu* goes on to say that of all the duties of the four *varnas*, the giving and receiving of *dāna* is essential to 'the protection of the universe' and the very maintenance and functioning of those varnas [Raheja xi-xii]. In the *Mahābhārata*, *Bhīṣma* told *Yudhisthira*: "Indeed I shall tell you, O *Bhārata*, how gifts should be made unto all orders of men. From desire of merit, from desire of profits, from fear, from free choice, and from pity gifts are made, O *Bhārata*! Gifts, therefore, should be known to be of five kinds [*Mbh. Anuśāsana Parva* 138, in Ganguli Vol. XI, p 288]." The ethical gains of gift-giving are praised in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* VIII 4.33 [Woodward and Hare, trans.]: "From this gift of mine, my heart finds peace; joy and gladness are gotten ...He gives to enrich and mellow his heart."

[11] In discussing their *jajmānī* relationship with others in their communities, many villagers interviewed in the Gangetic Plain referred to '*len-den*', hindi for 'giving and receiving'.

[12] Regarding this reciprocity, Douglas [p 138] remarked: "Gift giving and hospitality are seldom haphazard. Presents and invitations are full of symbolism about the relationship between the giver and the receiver." Lannoy [p 161] states further how integral the exchange of gifts is with the whole concept of *jajmānī*: "The only way to define the medium of exchange is the economy of a collective hierarchy such as the *jajmānī* system is by the idea of the gift..."; and [p 235]: "...it may be worthwhile to recall ...that the pre-economic system was basically a circulation of gifts." Quoting J. Gonda, Nath [p 15] wrote: " 'Giving demands a gift not in the sense of any commercial rationalism but because the gift allows a stream to flow from giver to receiver and from receiver to donor.' This is no doubt one of the reasons why the importance of *dāna* is underlined in a verse of the *Tattirīya Āraṇyaka*. 'Everything rests on *dāna*. Through it those who hate become friends.' "

ritual role in the wedding ceremony of the *Brāhman*'s daughter.[13] In return, the *Brāhman*, who owns the most land and lives in the largest house in the community, annually shares with the potter a portion of his crops and serves as priest and necessary medium for the potter in the latter's daily worship at the village temple. In a similar way, each person in a traditional Hindu society is linked to every other in a network of gift-giving that maintains social harmony.

Sharing food and money with the needy, bestowing gifts upon guests in the home, and participating generously in pilgrimage festivals and fairs are ethical duties of the Hindu householder that extend beyond the strict confines of *jajmānī*.[14] Each community has its own special occasions for distributing gifts. For example, in the *Nabānna* festival in Orissa during the Hindu month of *Bhadrav* (August-September), each household presents food to all of its neighbours and relatives and, when possible, gives financial assistance to those less fortunate.[15] As in all societies, a major occasion for the exchange of gifts is a wedding. Although the giving of gifts to the family of the groom (dowry) or to the family of the bride (known in India as 'bride-price') is frowned

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[13] As described in Chapter Two, pp 105-106 . See also Lannoy, p 158.

[14] Commenting on the Hindu duty to distribute gifts to those less fortunate, Nath [p 36] wrote: *Manu* (IV.32) stipulates that 'a householder must give (as much food) as he is able to spare to those who do not cook for themselves and to all beings one must distribute (food) without detriment (to one's own interest).' The principle of sharing was not confined to food alone but was to be applied to all items of daily use." Raheja [p 68] states further: "Numerous studies of ritual in both domestic and temple contexts ...have established that givings and receivings are fundamental components of almost all Hindu ritual." She also wrote [p 36]: "Villagers perform many rituals and give *dān*, they say, 'for auspiciousness' (*śubh ke māro*) and, as they generally go on to say, 'for one's own well-being achieved through gift-giving' (*ane khair-khairat ke maro*)."

[15] Commenting further about *Nabānna*, Behera [p 255] writes: "This festival reinforces social coherence and solidarity. Domestic servants, agricultural labourers as well as family ritual-servants receive clothings, eatables, and financial assistance from their respective patrons." Ragahvan [p 180] notes that *Nabānna* is celebrated on the first day of *Margasirā* with the tasting of the first fruits of the season and the produce of the fields and gardens. The Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang described the *Kānyakubja* festival in Prayag (Allahabad) in A.D. 643 as a seventy-five day celebration of worship and gift-giving in which everyone who attended was provided for [Sarkar pp 156-158].

upon by contemporary social reformers in India, it is a primary source of renegotiating and balancing the economy in the traditional societies.[16]

Gifts often convey generosity, charity, and the redistribution of material goods, but they also are used to rid the donor of bad luck in traditional India. Inauspiciousness (*aśubh*) is believed to have its own energy or force, which may be directed into an object and given away.[17] Custom designates each *jāti*, or subcaste, to be the recipient of another *jāti*'s *dān*. Inauspiciousness — such as that generated by a death, illness, or accident in the family — may literally be given away to another social group that will, in turn, rid itself of it through an appropriate gift to someone in their recipient *jāti*.[18] Historically in Hindu society, the outcastes were those lowest people in the chain of gift-giving who could not return the negative energy into the community. Their only means of cleansing themselves of this bad luck was through rituals to propitiate their gods and entice them into

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[16] Much has been written about dowries and the complex issues they raise. Focusing specifically upon dowry and ritual gift-giving within the context of a village in northeastern Uttar Pradesh, Gloria Raheja's research [pp 118-147] is among the most illuminating. Mandelbaum [Vol. 1, p 109] explores how the redistribution of wealth through gifts at a wedding affects the entire community: "A wedding can be used to activate a network of gift-giving involving families of different *jātis* as well as kin. A newly prosperous villager can give generous gifts at a wedding to people with whom he could not previously have afforded to exchange gifts or favors. Establishing a wider range of gift-giving brings returns in power as well as in prestige to a magnanimous donor because ...the recipients are more apt to support the gift-givers in the perennial contentions of village life."

[17] Raheja [p xii] documented in the Uttar Pradesh village of Pahansu: "The Pahansu data indicate that the central conception of *dān* as a prestation, when given in the proper ritual context and to the appropriate recipients, transfers inauspiciousness (*naśubh*) and brings about the auspiciousness (*śubh*), well being, and protection of the person, the family, the house, and the village, (and) is far more important than hierarchical considerations in structuring intercaste and kinship relations within the village." She comments later [p 31]: "...the significance of *dān*, and thus much of the giving and receiving that constitutes intercaste and kinship relations in Pahansu was focused on the transfer of inauspiciousness from donor to recipient." Certain days and certain months are auspicious for giving and receiving *dān* and others are inauspicious.

[18] Raheja [p 94] relates her observations of a pregnant woman whose inordinate pain was assumed to be caused by the machinations of the evil spirit of a dead relative. This evil, and hence the pain, was removed by waving over her abdomen a handful of wheat which was believed to absorb the spirit. The wheat was then given first to the ancestor shrine at an auspicious moment, and finally as *dān* to the wife of the family *Brāhman purohit* who accepted the gift and hence removed the inauspiciousness from the pregnant woman and her family.

giving absolution. In many communities, clay vessels become the repositories for negative energy which are given as *dān* to the appropriate recipients, whether that be a specific person, a shrine, or a special place outside the community.[19] The *Mahābhārata* [*Anuśāsana Parva* 61.66] sums up this attitude succinctly: "After committing numerous sins, a person makes gifts of earth unto members of the regenerate class, he casts off all those sins just as a snake casts off its slough."[20]

Since every aspect of Indian culture is inextricably bound to religion, it is natural that gift-giving be applied also in a Hindu's relationship to his or her gods, most often in the form of offerings to temples and shrines.[21] The *Bhagavad Gītā* 18.5.6 instructs: "The practice of worship through offerings [*yajña*], the giving of alms [*dāna*], and austerity [*tapas*] should not be abandoned. Indeed, these works should be performed; for worship, charity, and austerity are purifying to the wise."[22] Close to a thousand years earlier, the *Vedas* had encouraged sacrificial gifts as the best way to appease an angry pantheon. The *Bhagavad Gītā* 3.11-13 affirms the benefits gained by sacrifice to the gods: "By means of this sacrifice ... you will foster the gods ... and let those gods foster you; [thus] fostering each other, both of you will

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[19] Wadley [Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion, pp165-166] has documented a ritual in Uttar Pradesh called *Khappar* (the Pot) in which all of the illness in the village is symbolically collected as *dān* once each year into a earthenware pot and deposited outside the village boundaries.

[20] Nath p 28.

[21] Raheja p 69: "...the basic structure of ritual action ...is a reciprocal relation between two parties: the worshiper makes offerings of cloth, food, incense, and so forth, and receives the more valuable *prasād* or boons from the deity, resulting in or establishing a hierarchical relation between the two." Nath [p 218] comments: "...the pouring of water by the donor became the most significant part of the giftmaking rite. Without it no gift could be considered complete. It marked the formal annulment of the donor's power of possession over the gift-object. The act of pouring water at the time of giftmaking rendered the latter free of all harm and hence safe for the donee to accept." Lannoy (p 201] points out that the *Brāhman purohits* function by offering "to the gods the gifts of the community as a whole; in turn, the gods enter the body of the oracle — take possession of him or her — and direct community affairs through their chosen mouthpiece." See also Wadley *Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion*, p 152.

[22] Trans. Heinrich Zimmer, in Campbell p 386.

attain the supreme good. For the gods, fostered by sacrifice, will grant you the enjoyments which you desire. Whoever enjoys the enjoyments granted by Them without giving to Them in return — he is, verily, a thief. The good people who eat what is left after the sacrifice are released from their sins. On the other hand, those sinful ones who cook only for themselves — they, verily, eat their own sin."[23]

Although the sacrifice of mammals and fowls is still practiced occasionally in some Indian temples and shrines,[24] it is inhibited by cost and is frowned upon by many orthodox Hindus. Most of the terracotta sculptures discussed in this thesis represent animals symbolically sacrificed to the gods. An image of clay proffered to the gods is believed to gain for the donor the same merit as an animal sacrifice, and many believe that this image transmigrates into the spirit world for the god's personal use (Plates 3.3 and 3.4).[25] For this reason, most terracotta sculptures, like other objects made of clay, are intended to be ephemeral. They absorb the energy of the deity during the ceremony, after which the image is 'empty' and no longer meaningful or usable. Its sole value has been in the offering; after that ritual, it is left to

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[23] de Bary p. 282. Also from the *Bhagavad Gītā* 18.66-69: "A leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, whoever offers to Me with devotion — that same, proffered in devotion by one whose soul is pure, I accept. Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give away, whatever penance you practice — that, O son of Kuntī, do you dedicate to Me. Thus will you be freed from the good or evil fruits which constitute the bondage of actions. With your mind firmly set on the way of renunciation (of fruits), you will, becoming free, come to Me [ibid. p 290]."

[24] In particular, the devotees of the goddess *Kālī* in eastern India offer animal sacrifices in her temples and shrines. In the famous *Kālīghāt* Temple in Calcutta, several hundred goats may be slaughtered on her altar every day. Potters in many parts of India are among those *jātis* who regularly sacrifice chickens, and sometimes goats or pigs, to their gods (see Saraswati pp 87-88.)

[25] Devotees in shrines in every Indian state were documented as saying that the gods transformed their terracotta gifts into real beings in other world, as recorded in Chapters Four through Seven. Thus in Tamil Nadu, villagers said that their god *Ayyanar* and his soldiers (*Viran*) rode their gift horses in their nightly battles against evil. Similarly, the devotees of *Kālī-Mā* in Uttar Pradesh claimed that the goddess rode their elephants to protect them against demons. In Orissa *Thākurānī* was seen to ride her horses; *Durgā* is believed to bring to life the horses and elephants given to her in Bengal; *Śiva* animates the horse figures given to him in Madhya Pradesh; the tribal deity *Bhilalabābā* transforms animal figures in western Gujarat; and clay tigers come to life for *Hulidevaru* to protect villages in Karnataka.

disintegrate.[26] Votive terracottas, though given to shrines throughout India, are by no means essential to every ritual. The choice of gifts is entirely up to the votary: food, livestock, incense, oils, jewellery, clothing, money, or images composed of any substance (terracotta, stone, wood, paper, cloth, wax, iron, bronze, brass, copper, steel, silver, or gold). Other that flowers and food, the preponderance of terracotta votive gifts in shrines is natural in a country where much of the population is poor. Clay's easy accessibility and uncomplicated plasticity makes it affordable to everyone. As the gift is believed to be transformed into living substance in the cosmic world, its mundane and simplistic quality is immaterial.

The focus of Hindu ritual is divided into three physical areas: temple, local shrine, and household.[27] Temples, found in every city and town and in many villages, are intended to house the gods and to provide ritual spaces in which believers may approach these gods in worship. Representing permanence and longevity, temples are prominent edifices built of durable materials (stone, brick, concrete, or wood) to contain stone or bronze images (*mūrti*) of deities: primary gods and goddesses canonized in ancient scriptures and worshipped in wide areas of the subcontinent.[28] A temple compound may

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[26] "The principle of impermanence ensures the dynamism of Hinduism; the infinite takes form then vanishes. The invisible is made visible in stone, wood, or clay, then withdraws with decay, or is buried. Thus, spirit in matter never becomes completely crystallized. The immensity of divinity becomes manifest anew for each occasion, and the mystery is retained despite its brief partial revelation. ...This process of creation and destruction of sacred images, this powerful act of imagination, challenges us to ask why humans must insist over and again that the invisible should be, must be, made visible [Preston p 30].

[27] For the purpose of this thesis, a distinction is drawn between temples and local shrines and specific identities prescribed to each, although that distinction becomes hazy in some cases. For further discussion of the differences between temple and shrine, see Maury p 12.

[28] In a simplified definition of a Hindu temple, Tartakov [p 2] says: "The temple is the place of the God where, surrounded by the priests who serve Him, the Lord of all is to be found and approached. ... The devotee's goal is the God, and He is to be found in His temple surrounded by a protective wall and entered through a prominent gateway ... The temple is both the actual location of the God (His house) and an image of the universe over which His mercy holds sway. Within its walls the temple is a microcosm of the three worlds (*triloka*) that make up the Indian universe." George Michell in his book *The Hindu Temple* [p 49] says: "In the world of man the temple functions as a symbol of ultimate enlightenment: it is the house of the gods among men, the place where the gods may be approached and divine

contain the images of many gods and goddesses, each one assigned to its own smaller building or space.[29] Every aspect of a temple operates through ritual and dogma: its architectural design is precisely specified through scripture and tradition to guide the devotee's manner of devotion, and worship is governed by strict rules of behaviour and action.[30] Beneficial results of prayer can be achieved only by closely following these rules; mistakes can be disastrous. *Brāhman* priests are the hereditary male servants of the gods,

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knowledge discovered. As the centre of religious and cultural activities, the temple is also the product of a desire to transcend the world of man — the principles of its construction, the forms of its architecture and decoration, as well as the rituals that take place within its walls, are all aimed at ultimate liberation." He states further [ibid. p 61]: "The Hindu temple is designed to bring about contact between man and the gods; it is here that the gods appear to man. The process by which this contact is made comprises a series of ideas and beliefs incorporating a complex symbolism. Dynamic rituals and ceremonies permit a realization of these ideas through which the Hindu temple functions as a place of transcendence, a place where man may progress from the world of illusion to knowledge and truth. The rituals and ceremonies that lie at the very core of the religious life of Hinduism, as well as the more elusive ideas and beliefs that accompany divine personages, have fundamentally influenced the forms of temple architecture. ...The willingness of the gods and goddesses of Hinduism to make themselves visible and accessible to man is emphasized everywhere in Hindu literature. That temples are places where the gods make themselves visible is conveyed by the very terms used to designate a temple: a seat or platform of god (*prasada*), a house of god (*devagriham*), a residence of god (*devalaya*) or a waiting or abiding place (*mandiram*). The temple is a receptacle for the gods, who may appear their in the forms imagined by their worshippers. These forms are embodied in the sacred images or symbols of the deities which constitute the most important part of Hindu art. Sacred images and symbols of the deity to whom the temple is dedicated are housed in a small sanctuary with the temple known as the 'womb-chamber' (*garbhagriha*), a term indicating that here is contained the kernel and essence of the temple. ...The devotional cults which are served by the Hindu temple inevitably focus upon this sacred image or symbol of the deity in the 'womb-chamber', but devotion also extends to encompass the temple as a whole. Thus the temple is not only a place of worship but also an object of worship." Many of the qualities attributed here to temples would also apply to local shrines, as described later in this chapter. Major differences drawn are, although not inviolable, are the ritual specifications of temple architecture, the nature and functions of the attending priests, and the manner of devotion.

[29] "The Hindu sacred image (or *mūrti*) is extraordinarily polymorphic and ubiquitous. Such images of divinity are 'lifeless' until ceremonies of installation are performed. Thereafter the image *is* the deity, *not* merely a symbol of it. The image and the worshiper are fused together temporarily during *pūjā*, and this relationship is reestablished each time the act of worship is implemented. For Hindus, temple deities are particularly dynamic instruments for participation in the religious life. Such *mūrtis* are treated as persons; in the words of Appadurai and Breckenridge, they are treated as 'paradigmatic sovereigns' demanding and receiving all due respect from their devotees, and in turn, redistributing resources to temple, servants, donors, and worshipers. Even though some Hindu sacred images are not usually represented anthropomorphically — such as *Śiva liṅgās* — these aniconic representations receive offerings and are generally worshiped as though they were sacred personages [Preston p 9]."

[30] The elaborate and precise prescriptions governing temple siting, planning, architecture and construction, image-making and installation, and the rituals of worship are given in *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom* (*Kāśyapa-Jñānkāṇḍaḥ*) composed in the eight to tenth century A.D. (Goudriaan pp 75-270]. For a simplified description of temple rituals, see Michell pp 62-68.

ensuring correct procedure by interceding with the gods on behalf of the believers and conducting all temple worship.[31] They are the temples' ritual gift-givers who receive offerings and redistribute them on behalf of the deities. This role might be compared loosely to that of a Catholic priest, who administers the sacrament, takes the offering, hears confession, and suggests to the worshipper certain acts or penances as part of his vow to God to improve his life. The power and permanence of the temple are balanced in many rituals by the use of fragile and ephemeral terracotta vessels.

In a temple, a clay *ghaṭa* or *kalaśa*, the receptacle for Divine Energy, is placed before the image of a deity at the commencement of prayers. The sacred fire, essential to each ceremony, is contained within a *dīpa* (lamp). Most *dīpas* are small earthen dishes holding wicks immersed in *ghī* (clarified butter) or oil (Plate 3.5).[32] The *Brāhman* priest holds a lighted *āratī dīpa* in his right hand during his prayers and circles it clockwise in front of the image.[33] He also may use a clay dish to contain burnt offerings, from which he gives some *vibhūti* (sacred ashes) to the worshipper. On behalf of the deity, he accepts the devotees' gifts of food and flowers, which may be presented in

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[31] "Direct contact with the God is restricted to the priests (*pujārīs*) who are ritually purified for this purpose. These priests are responsible for the continual maintenance of the God in the shrine and act as His immediate servants. Purified by the same ritual acts that maintain the sanctity of the God's image in the shrine, these priests mediate between that holy realm and the less pure world of the men and women beyond the protecting walls. All exchanges between the Lord and His devotees take place through the intermediary of the priest [Tartakov p 6]."

[32] *Dīpas* are lighted in temples as part of the sixteen 'services' (*upacāra*) of *pūjā*. For more detail as to the proper use of *dīpas* within the *pūjā*, see Eschmann p. 81. Emphasizing the importance of lamps in ritual prayers, the *Skandapurāṇa* says: "Among the light of fire, the light of the sun, the light of the moon, this lamp is the best of lights [Kelkar p 6]."

[33] Jain ["The Light: Lamps of the Temple and the House", p 58] comments "*Āratī* is an invocation of a deity done with the accompaniment of a lamp and music. In such a ceremony, the lamp is held in one or both hands and waved repetitively in front of an image or any installation of a deity." Kelkar [p 9] states further: "In the act of consecration the flame of the *āratī* represents the soul of the devotee which is offered to the deity. It is rekindled with the divine light of the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. The devotee integrates Self with the Supreme Being. Such surrender is the core of prayer." The importance of *dīpas* to temple *pūjā* is exemplified by the existence of sixteen shops selling only *dīpas* within the *Jagannāth* temple compound in Puri, Orissa [Hein p 453].

terracotta plates or bowls. Part of this offering is kept for the temple; the rest, blessed by the deity, is returned to its donor in the same vessel. This vessel is believed to have absorbed Sacred Energy and may be kept by the devotee for a while in a place of honour. If on pilgrimage, he or she may eat food prepared in the temple and served on earthenware. Many large temples are pilgrimage centres visited constantly or seasonally by Hindus who have travelled long distances in order to worship there. In fulfilling their charitable duties, some of these temples feed the pilgrims on each day of their visit.[34] It is considered an honour to eat food cooked upon sacred premises.[35] Although clay vessels are in common use in Indian temples, terracotta sculptures there are rare.[36]

Most of the clay sculptures are given in outdoor shrines (Plate 3.7). Each Hindu community, whether or not it is large or prosperous enough to have a temple, has its own local shrines. A shrine is a hallowed place associated with the worship of a specific god or goddess and often is the spot

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[34] Some of the large temples that regularly feed large numbers of pilgrims are in Madurai, Kanchipuram, Chidambaram, Rameshwaram, Tiruchirapalli, Tirupati, Nasik, Puri, Buddh Gaya, Varanasi, Allahabad, and Hardwar.

[35] Local potters regularly supply the thousands of vessels that are required each week for use by pilgrims at the *Jagannāth* Temple in Puri, Orissa. Commenting on the food served in these vessels, Cort ["Temple Potters of Puri" pp 34-35] says: "As related in the main pilgrim legend, 'Whoever eats the food of the Lord shall be blessed — fools become wise, sick become healthy, poor become rich, the blind see again, the cripples walk' ... Above all, unlike ordinary cooked food, *mahaprasad* is not polluted by being 'consumed' by the deity in the course of the offertory ritual, nor can it ever be polluted thereafter, and it frees all who eat it from the ordinary caste-based restraints against sharing food. As the pilgrim legend states, ' *Brahmins* and untouchables should eat the Lord's food together; thus they both become the children of the Lord.' (ibid.) ...Through association with *mahāprasād*, the pots themselves have a non-ordinary status. ...A popular legend states that Lord *Jagannāth* himself insisted that earthen pots be used exclusively to prepare his food, after he suffered stomachache from food cooked in the customary brass vessels. By that request the deity identified himself with the poorest members of society, for whom clay pots are the sole recourse. Once emptied, the pots are seldom simply discarded on the rubbish heap, as would be the case with ordinary clay pots. After the last morsels of rice have been scraped out, the pots are carefully disposed of in a pond or tank. Larger sizes are kept in a clean place and often put to use as containers for the *tulasī* plant (*Ocinum sanctum*) that grows in the courtyard of every *Vaiṣnavite* household." A detailed description of the production and use of vessels for and in the Jagannāth temple appears in Cort ibid. pp 33-43. (See also Hein, p 464.)

[36] An unusually exception to that rule is seen in the *Sīddheśvara* Temple of Bhelulara, Vishnupur District, West Bengal, where terracotta horses are regularly placed before the *Śivalingas*, both inside and outside the shrine, in gratitude for boons granted (Plate 3.6).

to which legend attributes a miracle. These deities are affiliated with the earth and with natural phenomena, creation and destruction, seasons, fertility, agriculture, and healing.[37] Shrines usually are out-of-doors and unassuming, without any large covered structure, although the deity might be housed in a small building. Or, instead, a mud, stone, or cement platform can designate the sacred space upon which to pray. A shrine may be simply an ancient and venerable tree[38] or a niche in a group of stones or a special spot on the bank of a river or stream. In many shrines, natural beauty is the sole focus for worship; others contain ancient rock sculptures carved in some previous century and covered with the blackened crust of untold ages of offerings and ablutions; many others hold unformed stones that are black and smeared with brilliant *sindur* (vermilion) and marked roughly to resemble the features of a face.[39] Clothed in *dhotis* and *sāṛīs* and adorned with flowers,

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[37] For numerous references to the shrines dedicated to the spirits of nature and natural forces, see Crooke pp 25-82.

[38] Recording the comment of an Orissan villager, Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [p 201] noted: "Aber alle Göttinnen benötigen bei ihrem Kultplatz Bäume, 'um sich wohlzufühlen'", translated as: All goddesses need trees at their place of worship 'in order to feel comfortable.' See also Archana p 8 and Crooke p 400-418. For specific scriptural references to tree worship and tree shrines, see Stutley pp 339-340

[39] The essence of these local shrines is well (although somewhat theatrically) summed up by Maury [pp 12-14]: "One can hardly adduce a whim of casual nomenclature when the great temple is colloquially called *deva mandir*, or Dwelling of God, while the village shrine is popularly referred to as *purana mandir*, literally Dwelling of Ancient Lore. These designations seem to suggest a deliberate juxtaposition, contrasting the priests' deities to the people's own; the new religion to the old tradition; two supernatural spheres, one of ostensible glory and power, the other of hidden substance and meaning. However blurred by the passage of time and ambiguous from age-long adulteration, however ill-defined and recondite, this meaning still appears to retain some precious reality for the worshiper. ...And here (in the village shrine) is the divine image. Barely visible in the dark hollow of the altar niche, often crudely formed by untutored hands and devoid of artistic merit, it embodies all meaning, all reality, to the devotee. At once terrifyingly awesome and sublimely beautiful to him, this vague, sometimes weird and occasionally unidentifiable shape radiates the magic of a world beyond and its transcendence, of which for moments he becomes a part. His perceptions intensified by this communion, his sensibilities attuned and linked to those of generations of his ancestors, he may fleetingly glimpse his own place within the eternal round of life. Here, in the *purana mandir* is the Ancient Lore incarnate in the divine presence of the effigy. ...Nature herself becomes the *purana mandir*, a boundless abode of the Divine enchanted with the wonders of perennial growth and regeneration, with the ultimate magic of perpetual transformation. It may well be here that the old religion achieves it most persuasive potency, here that it receives its greatest attributes. ...These open-air altars may be encountered everywhere — in a field or in a clearing, next to the central village well or in front of a township's gate, at a crossroad or on a hilltop, close to a river's fording point or on a tiny island in the middle of a lake. More than a few are placed near a great temple,

these simple stones represent the god or goddess to their worshippers (Plate 3.8).[40] The deity honoured in a shrine may be pan-Indian, one of the great gods of classical Hinduism served by a *Brāhman* priest. More likely it is a *grāmadevatā*, a local god associated with the specific region and community.[41] It may be tenuously linked to the larger pantheon but retains its own distinct legends, customs, and rituals.

A shrine may be affiliated with the full community or only a sector of it. The *pujārī* [42](priest) who attends a shrine might be a *Brāhman*, but many are not; *pujārīs* may be male or female, from any caste with a hereditary or devotional commitment to the maintenance and care of the sanctuary.[43]

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frequently even within its walled-in precincts, as though to assert the antithesis and unvanquished rivalry of their inspiration and to offer an alternative to the visitor. As diverse as their locations are the geneses of these holy places. Some, ostensibly, are the remains of rough tabernacles that have wasted away. Others may mark an event of presumed supernatural intervention. Many had their beginnings as sites of votive offerings. Many more, particularly those near gates and wells and crossroads, were patently set up to honor a guardian deity, embodiment of apotropaic power. Quite a few seem to have been erected as tokens of personal piety. Most of them, however, owe their origins to the preexisting sacredness of the spot they have come to occupy — an ageless tree, a gushing spring, an oddly shaped stone, a jagged crevice or a cavern in the rock, an isolated grove, a lotus-covered pond, each an embodiment of creative energy, a manifestation of a divinity of the old religion, and habitation of the supernatural." Kramrisch [*Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, p 59] confirms this summation accordingly: "An unhewn stone marks the presence of deity. It is daubed with red color, which holds the memory of blood sacrifices. The stone is permanent. It outlasts the perishable, ever renewed offerings made by art. The stone is outside the temporality of man-shaped things. Unhewn stones, placed under and canopied by the spreading branches of sacred trees are part of the Indian landscape. No conscious attempt is made at a harmonious arrangement. It comes about where the presence of deity is proffered by a visible, though not man-made, sign. If the tribal and village art of India is seen against the high skyline of the Hindu temples with their countless images of gods, it is seen at the same time within the Indian landscape, which is dotted here and there, wherever you go, by a red-daubed stone, a sign of the presence of deity." See also Preston p. 10.

[40] e.g. Crooke pp 317-325.

[41] Further identifying the concept of *grāmadevatā* as as the tutelary deities of specific locations, Kinsley [p 197] says: "In the context of village life one of the most (if not the most) significant and powerful divine presences is the *grāmadevatā*, a deity who is especially identified with the village and toward whom the villagers often have a special affection. It is not uncommon, in fact, for there to be several *grāmadevatās* in a village, each of whom may have a specialized function."

[42] also spelled *pucari*

[43] Most of the several thousand village shrines documented in prepāratīon for this thesis were served by non-*Brāhman pujārīs*, the majority of whom had other principle occupations with the care of the shrine and mediation with the deity only an ancillary duty. In this way, the *pujārī* for the *Kālī-Mā* shrine in Mundera, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh, was a *Harijan* labourer, and Vaithyalinga Pathar, a potter, was the *pujārī* for the *Ayyānar* shrine on the border of Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu. Most of the *pujārīs* interviewed had inherited this vocation from other family members, although it is not

Unlike *Brāhman pujārīs* in temples, however, *pujārīs* in shrines generally do not mediate between the believer and his or her god or goddess. Rituals at the shrine are observed on a daily, seasonal, or annual basis, depending upon the local social tradition and individual inclination. The shrine's upkeep is shared by the community — perhaps by a form of 'tax' levied by the local administrative council or else by regular patrons, each of whom may vow to the deity to provide incense, food, and flowers regularly on a specified day.[44] Although the entire community may gather at the shrine for a specific festival ceremony, worship there usually is private — the personal commitment of the devotee to his or her deity. There are hundreds of thousands of these ancient shrines throughout the subcontinent, and many of them are honoured with seasonal gifts of votive terracottas.

The functioning of most shrines relies upon terracotta ritual paraphernalia: *ghaṭas, kalaśas, dīpas,* and offertory vessels. Occasionally, the only representation of the deity in the shrine is a clay pot, as described in Chapter Two; but terracotta images of gods are sometimes worshipped in a few states (Plate 3.9).[45] Clay images placed in shrines as gifts for the gods vary in shape, size, and style, reflecting the diversity of the cultures they represent.[46] Each is given in response to a vow — a sacred pledge to a god or

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unusual for an individual to be 'called' to this profession by a divine vision or as part of a miraculous recovery from a serious difficulty. See also Maloney pp 176-178 and Wadley *Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion*, pp 36-37.

[44] In many of the shrines documented, it was recorded that one person would vow, as part of his or her reciprocal agreement with the deity, to provide the necessary incense, flowers, and some sacrificial fruit on one day each week (or, in some shrines, once a month). In this way, each day was assigned to a single individual whose caretaking duty accrued divine merit.

[45] Terracotta is rarely the preferred medium for sculpting consecrated images of worship in India; stone or stucco is preferred. Terracotta images of the god *Ayyanar*, the goddess *Mārīamman*, and the *Sapta-Mātrikās* were recorded in Tamil-Nadu, *Kālī* images in Kerala (on the border of Tamil Nadu), sculptures of *Gaṇeśa* in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, and images of *Śītalā, Manasā*, and *Kālī* in West Bengal. Unfired mud images of many different deities are installed in temporary shrines in Orissa, Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu (see Chapter Four, pp 196-199), but they are worshipped only for a specified festival period and then destroyed.

[46] Many examples of the existing varieties are given in Chapter Four.

spirit in return for his or her favour. If the devotee implores the deity to grant a specific wish — such as a cure for illness or rains after a long drought — and the boon is granted, then the worshipper will give to the god or goddess a gift made of clay. Associated only with shrines and with individual commitment, these clay gifts are links to the Divine with sacred values, which for the Hindu may exceed that of any treasure.[47]

Horses and elephants are the most common forms of votive terracottas, although cattle, camels, tigers, many other animals, and figures of gods and humans may also be found. The Indian elephant, the mightiest of animals, has been used in war and peace as a symbol of strength and grandeur throughout Asian history.[48] Horses have also been associated with power and prestige since the time of the early Āryans, who rode them to conquer India thousands of years ago.[49] Although both animals are relatively rare in India today, they remain symbols of kingship and military might. They are also associated with marriage ceremonies: The elephant is the traditional mount in royal wedding processions, while a white horse carries the groom to most middle-and-upper-class Hindu weddings. Many Indian gods, particularly those worshipped in rural areas, are depicted riding elephants and horses. Ancient scriptures even refer to ritual sacrifices of living horses (*aśvamedha*).[50] Today, despite the extraordinary diversity of customs and beliefs within Hinduism, votive terracotta sculptures of either or both of these

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[47] e.g. Chattopadhyay *The Glory of Indian Handicrafts*, pp 172-173 and Preston pp 10-11.
[48] Examples of elephants in Indian history, mythology, religion, and art are listed in Doniger pp 11 & 20, Sen p 9, and Iyer pp 43-50.
[49] Examples of horses in Indian history, mythology, religion, and art are listed in Biswas *Horse in Early Indian Art* pp 9-89, Doniger pp 10 & 19, Sen pp 79-89, Iyer pp 36-42, and Kramrisch *Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, pp 52-53.
[50] Stutley pp 24-27 and Sen pp 83-84. It is not unlikely that the offering of terracotta horses as sacrifices to the gods is a continuation of the ancient practice of *aśvamedha*.

animals are given to local shrines in almost every Indian district (Plate 3.10).[51]

The actual commission of a terracotta is a ritual that begins with the devotee's prayer to a deity with whom he strikes a bargain. Once the specifications have been decided, the potter assumes the ritual responsibility.[52] As *Prajāpati*, the Creator, he imbues the sculpture with the form and qualities explicitly required by the god, moulding basic elements into a receptacle for cosmic energy. When the donor returns to pick up the finished terracotta, he pays the potter well, according to the acceptable norm, perhaps with food, new clothes, some money, or even a cow or goat. The transaction of payment between craftsman and devotee effectively severs the potter's bond to his sculpture, thus transferring the full merit of the votive gift to the donor. With the commission finished and the potter paid, the terracotta awaits the appropriate moment when it is given to the god or goddess in fulfilment of the vow.[53] At the instant of giving, the deity breathes life into the

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[51] When considering a survey of the entire subcontinent, horses are more commonly given to shrines. Kramrisch [*Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village,* p 58] comments: "Horses are offered to any village god, male or female. Deposits of clay horses abound not only in the sacred groves of South India or the western hills where *Kasumar Dhamor* protects his people, but also near the village shrines of Bengal, on the graves of Hindu *Tantrik* and of Muslim saints. By an irony of creative justice, the village potter makes clay horses in their basic timeless shapes, not only for the aboriginal and lowly (the members of the 'scheduled castes') but also at the order of the high castes, the *Brahmans* and *Kshatriyas.*"

[52] Shah *Votive Terracottas of Gujarat,* pp 19 & 42.

[53] e.g. Shah "Pottery and Votive Terracottas", p 140. Regarding the transfer of merit from craftsman to patron, Kramrisch ["Artist, Patron, and Public in India", p 56] writes: "The work of art in India, over and above its completeness as creative act and form, has as its purpose and function the acquisition of merit on a spiritual plane. This merit, however, belongs to the patron or donor. For merit's sake, he has commissioned the work which is to secure for him a lasting place in heaven while still on earth, a blessedness not only for his person, but for his relatives and charges as well. The work of art, as a vehicle to heaven and its bliss, belongs to the patron. He remunerates the artist so that the merit should not accrue to the artist, but should remain with the patron. In this way the artist faces each task with a full responsibility ever renewed. ...(The artist) is not only the creator or maker of objects, that is works of art, the purveyor of aesthetic delight by which a world beyond the senses becomes visible, tangible, concrete, so that it can be enjoyed and understood; he also makes them act effectively by means of their aesthetic presence whose magic literally secures for the donor a place in heaven while on earth, and whose virtue acts for the well-being of those who are in the orbit of power or connected with the patron."

image, transubstantiating its essence into reality in the spirit world: A sculpture of mud placed in a shrine becomes a living gift to the gods. After it has been given and the image transformed, the remaining terracotta is of no importance. It is simply a shell of the offering, discarded and left thereafter at the site to disintegrate.

The household is the third major focus of Hindu ritual, since each home is a centre of activity in traditional India and all activities are infused with faith and custom (Plate 3.11). Each Hindu house has its own sacred area: a room, a niche, or a special space specifically devoted to worship of the gods. Separate and sacrosanct, this area is the most honoured and private portion of the home and is protected from intrusion and pollution.[54] It contains images — usually sculpted in stone, metal, wood, or terracotta — of the deities that the family worships. Its walls are hung with paintings or posters of the gods, as well as photographs of favourite saints, *gurus*, and revered family members. Any item that is sacred to the family may be kept here, including terracotta offertory plates, *dīpas*, *kalaśas*, *ghaṭas*, ceremonial vessels (such as those used in a recent wedding), and clay images remaining after a festival.[55] It is here that important family rituals are conducted,

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[54] "The family shrine can be set up in a special room, or it can be established in a separated area of a room that has other functions. In the latter case, it is most commonly placed in the kitchen, which has a particular prominence as the place where food is to be prepared. The ritual cleanliness of both locations is inseparable [Tartakov p 40a]."

[55] "The home is the second major context of Hindu image worship. It is an equal and in some ways even a superior alternative to the monumental context of the public temple. Temple worship involves the individual in a public manifestation of his devotion. Worship at the home shrine is the private and, therefore, the more personal expression of that devotion. Hindu worship ...is not basically congregational. The participation involved in any particular ceremony is usually focused within the family unit, through its head. For this reason, it is in many ways and for many purposes no better to go to a community shrine than to the family shrine at home. For many rites, in fact, the opposite is true: the home shrine is exclusively the appropriate location. It has been said that a thorough Hindu devotion can be maintained without ever needing to resort to a public temple. ...As the temple is a focus of the general community solidarity, the home shrine is a focal point of family solidarity. ...What is most significant is the freedom that the family shrine offers the individual family head and his (or her) preceptor, of choices among the standards established in the community. Not only does the establishment of the private shrine offer the opportunity for a choice among the community's Gods, it further allows for a more diverse variety and a less

generally under the auspices of a female elder. Beliefs and customs regarding proper lifelong behaviour are passed down from generation to generation. Many household rituals are preventive: ways of acting or expressing oneself that prevent ill fortune and improve negative conditions. Some of these are purely practical — proven remedies and therapies based upon inherited lore. All are believed essential to the maintenance of a healthy existence; without them, the family could not exist.

Some of the most important household rituals are involved with vows made to the gods. Each local tradition defines its own parameters of commitment to sacred vows, most of which maintain difficult strictures intended to humble the devotee before the deity. A common form of vow known as *vrata* requires that the worshipper fast and perform penance.[56] The

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orthodox selection than usual in the public shrine. The family altar has little if any need for architectural pretensions. It is not the God's mansion, but the simple place of His visitation. It can be as minimal in structure as a single shelf. What is required is an area ritually purified and distinguishable from its less pure surroundings: a place to set up the image(s) and to carry out the ritual of honoring, that is the basis of the *pūjā*. ...The family shrine is the personal complement of the public, community temple. Where social integration of the individual and the family is a function of the one, personal individuation is the function of the other [ibid. p 40a]."

[56] According to Wadley ["Vrats: Transformers of Destiny", pp 148-149]: "*Vrat* is most commonly translated as a 'religious vow' or 'fast.' The origins of the word are in dispute, but Kane derives it from the root *vṛ*, 'to choose or to will.' *Vrata* in Sanskrit, then, means 'what is willed' or 'will' (Kane p 5]. The range of meanings of vrata is from command or law to any vow, with the modern emphasis on vows associated with a particular pattern of worship. ...Modern *vratas* imply a willing or a vow to gain some desired end, undertaken optionally. Often some penance or austerity is required, normally fasting. ...*Vrats* as practiced by present-day Hindus are part of the *bhakti* tradition. The basic aim of a *vrat* is to influence some deity to come to one's aid as one struggles across the ocean of existence. The austerities associated with the *vrat* are signals to the deity of one's faith and devotion. The assumption is that the deity will reward this faith and service with some kind of boon." Wadley elsewhere states [*Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion*, p 63]: "In its widest connotation, a *vrat* is a religious act often involving penance ...; in the *Mahābhārata*, it was a religious vow or practice, a meritorious act of devotion or austerity." Ray [p 11] defines *bratas*, a variant spelling, as: " 'the taking of a vow', or 'to undergo solemnly certain physical and mental conditions with a view to achieving a desired result or object'. And a *brata* is observed to satisfy 'the natural forces or superior beings' believed to be divine powers or gods: the Sun-god, the Moon-god, the Star-goddess, the Earth-goddess, the Bird-goddess, the Serpent-goddess, etc. There are nearly seventy *bratas* ascribed to the different gods and goddesses that are commonly known to us (in Bengal)." Skelton [p 57] comments: "The origin of these *vratas* is very ancient and in early grammatical and religious texts the meaning of the term is not completely fixed. In general it can be defined as a religious observance, often involving some form of austerity such as a fast, which is designed to achieve a particular object for the individual or social group."

decision to make a *vrata* usually is personal; it does not require the services of a *Brāhman* or other *pujārī*. The rituals of *vrata*, handed down in Hindu households from mother to daughter for centuries, remain primarily the province of women.[57] *Vratas* originated in the early Āryan ceremony of *Vrata Stoma*, which was intended to cleanse and purify non-Āryans so they could join in the Aryan rites of sacrifice and thus be accepted into the new society.[58] Today *vratas* exist in innumerable variations[59] in urban and rural communities as inherited means of individual expression that free the worshipper from conforming to the hierarchical canons of *Brāhmanical* dogma. Classical Hinduism emphasizes esoteric rituals conducted by *Brāhmans* and aimed at the attainment of a pure soul, while *vratas* attempt to ease mundane existence through manipulation and mollification of good and evil powers.[60] *Vratas* allow the Hindu to circumvent his natural *karma* (fate)

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[57] "Although *vratas* can be sanctioned by scriptural authority and need not be exclusively performed by women, they generally constitute a parallel series of religious observances to those conducted in honour of the main Hindu deities. Carried out by women in the home instead of by temple priests, their purpose is invariably to control and propitiate the benevolent or demonic powers of nature rather than assure spiritual bliss or emancipation from rebirth ...Needless to say the deities worshipped in these rites are not the high Gods of orthodox Hinduism but local godlings and various forms of the ubiquitous mother-goddess, who preside over important spheres of village life. It is to *Lakshmi* that the people look for prosperity in the harvest, to *Manasa Devi* for protection against snake-bite, *Sitala Devi* for preservation from small-pox and *Shashthi* for the safeguarding of children immediately after birth [Skelton p 57]."

[58] Jayakar p 10.

[59] Although Jayakar [p 134] claims that there are over two thousand *vratas* and Ray [p 11] has counted seventy, the results of this survey suggest that the full sum is truly incalculable; there are thousands upon thousands of *vratas* in use today throughout India.

[60] In Ray's opinion [p 12-13] *vratas* were originally a form of religious ritual which was open to practice by all people and all sexes, but the growth of *Brahmanism* encouraged male-oriented primary deity worship which branched off from *vratas*, leaving them primarily to the observance of women. He says: "...the introduction of the *Brahmanic* religion, philosophy, and mode of worship, tended to disintegrate the full-scale functions of the *brata* religion. It compelled the right-wheel (men's branch) of *brata* to fall from the axle and roll onto a lower level of the society, leaving the left-wheel (women's branch) aloof in the home. ...The activities of the men's branch are now connected with *pūjā* (temple service), although we know that *brata* is not *pūjā*. *Pūjā*, as we see it today, is connected mainly with the 'religio-political gods' portrayed in anthropomorphic forms, whereas *brata* is connected mostly with household adoration of the gods representing 'natural forces or superior beings' in imaginary, actual or theriomorphic forms." Ray's opinion is highly selective: men have been documented performing *vratas* throughout India, although not as commonly as women. It also may be erroneous to differentiate between *pūjā* and *vratas*, since an element of *vratas* incorporates *pūjā*: "All *vrat* involve *pūjā*, worship of deities, but not all *pūjā* are associated with *vrat* [Wadley *Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion*, p 35]." Also many

through direct intercession with the gods — generally personal deities associated with family, community, region, or natural phenomena.[61] The rituals demanded by a *vrata* are centred within the household (Plate 3.12), although the devotee may be required to perform some ceremonies outside the home. Bound by their own restrictions, *vratas* nevertheless encourage a freedom of artistic expression in poetry, song, dance, crafts, and art that greatly enriches India's folk traditions.[62] They are one form of ritual involved with a mutual exchange with the gods, a giving and receiving of gifts.[63]

Prophylactic and curative by nature, *vratas* are generally cyclical. In some areas, minor *vratas* are performed on certain days of the week or month as reminders to the gods of their devotees' commitments.[64] For example, a woman may vow to the god that every Monday she will go without food and keep her energies focused on prayer in return for protection of her household from evil spirits. Other *vratas*, responding to unusual circumstances, require formidable discipline and complex rituals. In enacting a *vrata*, a woman often

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vratas are made to principle, personified deities such as *Lakṣmī vrat*, *Sūrya vrat*, etc. His point, however, about the distinction between *Brahmanism*, or the canonized male-oriented worship of classical deities, seems apt. *Vratas* are focused upon personalised and inherited forms of worship within the home and community which are distinctly separate from orthodox temple-oriented worship. Jayakar [p 10] comments further: "Free of the *Brahmanical* canons which demanded discipline and conformity in art and ritual, the *Vrata* tradition freed the participant from the inflexible hold of the great tradition. Unlike the *Brahmanic* worship of *mantra* and sacrifice which was available only to the *Brahmin*, the *Vrata pūjā* and observances were available to the woman, to the non-*Brahmin*, to the *Śūdra* and the tribal. ...The *vrata* rites through the centuries were to maintain their integrity and existence, independent and parallel to the orthodox *Brahmin* dominated culture."

[61] Wadley "Vrats: Transformers of Destiny", pp 154-161. "The literature on *vrats* states that any sins in this life or past lives can be effectively removed by performing the proper *vrat* [Wadley ibid. p 157]."

[62] An essential part of all *vratas* are *kathās*, the reading or reciting of the myths or legends associated with the *vratas*. Wadley [*Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion*, pp 46-48 and 61-84] describes some of these *kathās* and their essential symbiosis with *vratas*.

[63] "There is, then, a reciprocal arrangement between the gods and men. Man is a *bhakta*, devotee, and gives the gods devotion and service in the form of *vrat*, *pūjā*, fasts, songs, stories, etc. The gods must in turn complete the transaction by giving a boon (*vardan*) because of their *kripa*. Their *kripa* is a feeling of kindness and is manifested in the giving of a boon, based on their concern for someone who has given them devotion and made them happy [Wadley ibid. p 81]."

[64] In her detailed study of one Uttar Pradesh village, Wadley [ibid. pp 156-163] lists and describes local *vratas* specific to certain days of the week and year.

promises the deity that if she is given a boon, she will undergo prolonged and strenuous fasting and penance. Many *vratas* incorporate the production and/or use of terracottas as devotional offerings to the gods.[65]

Chattha (also spelled *Chhat, Chaat, Chat, Chhatra,* and *Chatra*) is a household *vrata* particularly popular throughout Bihar in which women make vows to *Surya*, the sun god. It takes place twice in each year, in *Kartika* (October-November) and *Caītra* (March-April), although its most important and common observance is in former month, just six days after *Divālī*.[66] For *Chattha vrata*, devotees promise *Sūrya* that if they are granted a particular wish, such as pregnancy after a long period of barrenness, or the healing of a disabled child, or a job following prolonged unemployment, then they will conduct the *vrata* each year for a specified number of years, perhaps for their lifetime.[67] This *vrata* demands long fasts, intense prayers, and often arduous physical ordeals.[68] For the *Kosi-bharaṇa* ritual, in the last evening before the

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[65] "In the religion of *brata*, art is an indispensable means of communication between devotees and gods [Ray p IV]." Abanindranath Tagore said: "The nucleus of *vratas* is desire. This desire is represented in images [quoted in Archana p 12]. "Many *vratas* require the participants, particularly women, to sculpt their own temporary, unfired figures of gods and representations of family members or livestock. Usually crude in form, they may be made of clay, mud, cow dung, or even sticky rice or grains. Wadley [*Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion* pp 155-161] described many of these used in rituals in an Uttar Pradesh village. Other references to specific *vratas* may be found in Raheja pp 178-180, Behura pp 249-252, and Jayakar pp 134-146.

[66] This description is based upon the witnessing and recording of *Chattha vrata* rituals in Patna city and in north Bihar on two occasions, in 1980 and 1989.

[67] Srivastava [p 195] points out that *Chattha vratas* can also be to the Mother Goddess, *Saṣṭhi*, although no reference was found to that worship during this survey. Raheja [pp 79-80] describes a *vrata* to *Sūrya* in Madhya Pradesh and lists all the diseases eradicated and benefits bestowed by its observance. Crooke [p 33] notes that the sun is prayed to for healing diseases, particularly leprosy.

[68] "The festival of *Chhattha* is confined primarily to Bihar and the adjacent parts of eastern Uttar Pradesh, in which the Sun god is worshipped. The presented set of rituals are to be performed on the fulfilment of specific desires. These may range from the cure of diseases to the attainment of sons, the successful marrying-off the daughters, and so on. Both men and women participate in the *Chhattha* festival since it is believed that even the slightest carelessness in this ritual performance may harm the devotee considerably. Devotees not only observe a fastidious two days fast, but meticulously perform a series of conventional rituals by which both the setting and the rising Sun are worshipped [Jayaswal and Krishna p 27]." Rani [p 33] commented: "Prepāratīons begin several days in advance, and those women who plan to take an active part in the *pūjā* have to purify themselves by abstaining from routine household chores, wearing only unstitched clothes, eating saltless food cooked in earthen vessels, and sleeping on the floor. The offerings are prepared with ritual care on the evening of the sixth day (after *Divālī*), and carried to the river bank at midnight. The

final day of worship, the votary's family joins her in the courtyard or in front of their home to sing and pray throughout the night (Plate 3.14). Terracotta elephants, commissioned or purchased from a local potter, are installed on the courtyard floor within temporary shrines (*maṇḍapa*) made of sugarcane stalks. As part of the ceremony, lamps on the sides and backs of the elephants are lit, and baskets of food are placed before them.[69] Before dawn the next morning, the family carries the elephants and the baskets of food in threshing baskets tied with pieces of red cotton to ward off evil spirits to the edge of a nearby river, stream, or reservoir. The most auspicious place to perform this last rite is the banks of the Ganges. One of the votary's penances may be to cover the entire distance between home and water source, even many kilometres, while prostrate in prayer. To do this, she lies down with her hands stretched before her, marking the spot they reach with her fingertips. Then she stands, steps up to that spot, and again prostrates herself.[70] When she reaches her destination, the terracotta elephant, still housed in its sugarcane shrine, is placed in the water (Plate 3.15). The votary stands immersed to her waist, her palms pressed together in prayer to the rising sun

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ritual ends at dawn on the morning of the seventh day. *Chaath* is not just a simple festival or religious ritual. It is an expression of the forces of unquestioning faith at work, faith that the gods and goddesses will accept the ordeal and sacrifices they are being offered and continue to extend the benevolence of their bounty in the year to come."

[69] Kalyan Krishna, with whom the author first witnessed the performance of this *vrata* in Patna , wrote [Jayawsal and Krishna p 27]: "An enclosure (*maṇḍapa*) is first prepared to demarcate the 'sacral space' from the rest of the courtyard by tying together four sugar-cane rods with a fragment of red cloth. One or more terracotta elephants or a plain earthen cooking-vessel (*karahī*) are then placed inside this enclosure. To install at least a single terracotta object for each fulfilled or unfulfilled wish is mandatory. Terracotta elephants are made to face west, in the direction of the setting Sun, and newly rising moon. The elephant is then painted with a pigment or vermilion (*sindoor*) and riceflour paste. A water jar (*ghara*) is then placed above the elephant, and the earthen oil-lamps (*dīpa*) actually attached to the elephant's back are filled with liquid butter (*ghee*) and lit. The earthen bowl likewise attached to the votive figure is filled with fruit and home made sweetened wheat-cakes (*thekua*). The remaining fruit and *thekua* are tied to the red cloth binding the sugar-cane enclosure. These votive offerings of *thekua* and fruit have already been offered to the setting sun." See also Srivastava p 195.

[70] Another common penance during *Chattha* is for those performing the *vrata* to carry baskets around their neighbourhoods begging for money which will be invested in *pūjās* to *Sūrya*. The devotees believe that by humbling themselves before everyone in *Sūrya*'s name, they will endear themselves to the deity.

(Plate 3.16). The food is symbolically offered to the *Sūrya* and then divided among the family members after its consecration. When eaten, it will impart its new sacred essence to the devotees. With these final prayers, the *vrata* is finished for another year and the votive terracotta elephants, their purpose fulfilled, are left in the water to dissolve back into the clay from which they came.

Vratas must be enacted correctly and precisely; any deviation from the formula invites the anger of the honoured deity and may bring unhappiness or misfortune to the devotee and her family. Although the celebrations usually associated with *vratas* encourage the participation of other family members, the onus of the devotee's vow is hers alone.[71] As in any other negotiation, however, she is absolved of responsibility to her vow if the action requested of the deity does not occur. For example, when a woman petitions the goddess *Oba* in Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh, she vows to give the goddess a terracotta elephant commissioned from the local potter. If the goddess does not fulfil the request, then the woman is no longer obligated to place the elephant in the goddess's shrine during her annual festival and the order is cancelled.

Gift-giving in India is a form of mutual exchange, a means for balancing inequalities and undoing wrongs. Gifts to the gods — whether worship takes place in a temple or a shrine or within the household — ensure the maintenance and continuity of life. The *Mahābhārata* (*Āraṇyaka Parva*

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[71] In Orissa Behura [p 241], discussing the danger of incorrectly enacting a *vrata*, remarks: "And largely for that reason a *vrata* is not to be observed by everybody. It is only observed by those individuals who are supposedly capable (both physically and mentally) of successfully accomplishing this. A *vrata* is usually observed by an adult and when he or she becomes incapable or unable to observe it, the same is taken over by any other capable family member. It has generally been found that a daughter-in-law takes over the observance from her mother-in-law. And in case one becomes incapable of observing a *vrata* and has none at the time to whom he or she could make over the same, then one bids a farewell ritually to it on the last observance, which is known as *Vrata Ujheiba*."

245.33) says, "Even a very small gift, made in proper time with a very pure mind, is known to be of infinite fruit in the other world."[72]

[72] As quoted by Nath p 39.

Plate 3.1) The *Bhilalas*, in common with most Indian tribesmen, believe that their gods cannot be represented by icons, so the *colia* (wooden pillars) in this shrine to their tutelary deity, *Kunpala Dev*, are simply focuses for worship. In between them are the broken terracotta images of earlier offerings — a horse and an elephant slightly more than two feet high — while in front are two clay *dhabu* ('temples'), believed to contain the spirits of the dead (Ambari, Jhabua District, Madhya Pradesh).

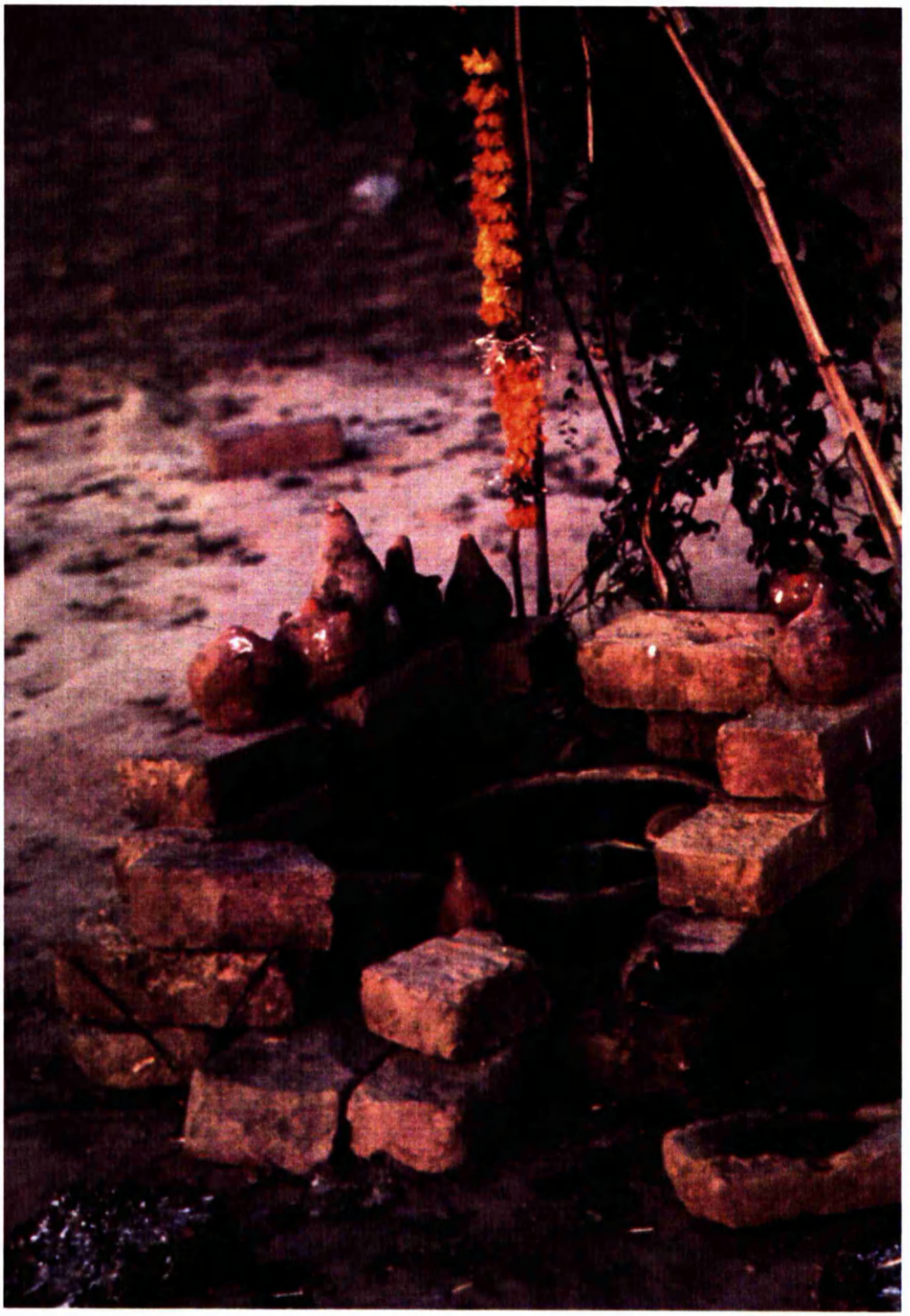

Plate 3.2) Not all votive terracotta sculptures are figurative. These amorphous clay cones in a shrine in Vikrampur, Varanasi District, Uttar Pradesh, are symbolic of earth energy and were given to the god *Dī-Bābā* to ensure healthy crops.

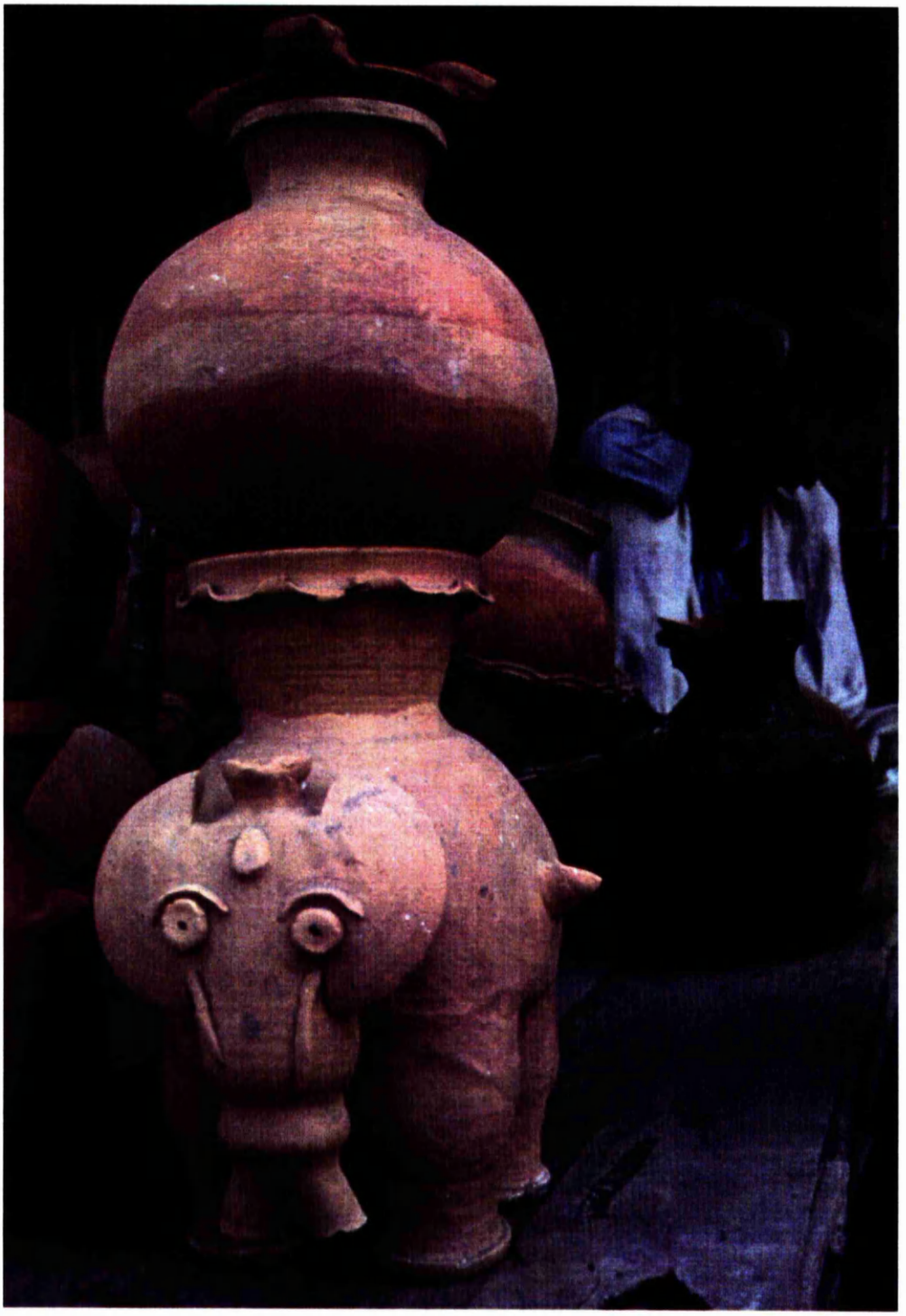

Plate 3.3) For sale at the shop outside a potter's house in Muzzarfarpur, Bihar, this terracotta elephant, composed of elements thrown on the wheel and surmounted by a pot and *dīpas*, will be purchased by devotees to be given to *Sūrya* during the *Chattha* festival.

Plate 3.4) A terracotta elephant for sale in a *Chattha* festival market in Patna, Bihar will be offered to *Sūrya* in gratitude for his blessings. It is surrounded by *dīpas* which will be floated in the Ganges River at the sunrise *pūjā*.

Plate 3.5) Simple clay *dīpas*, when lighted, draw the attention of the deity being honoured and symbolically carry the devotees' prayers into the heavens (Patna, Bihar).

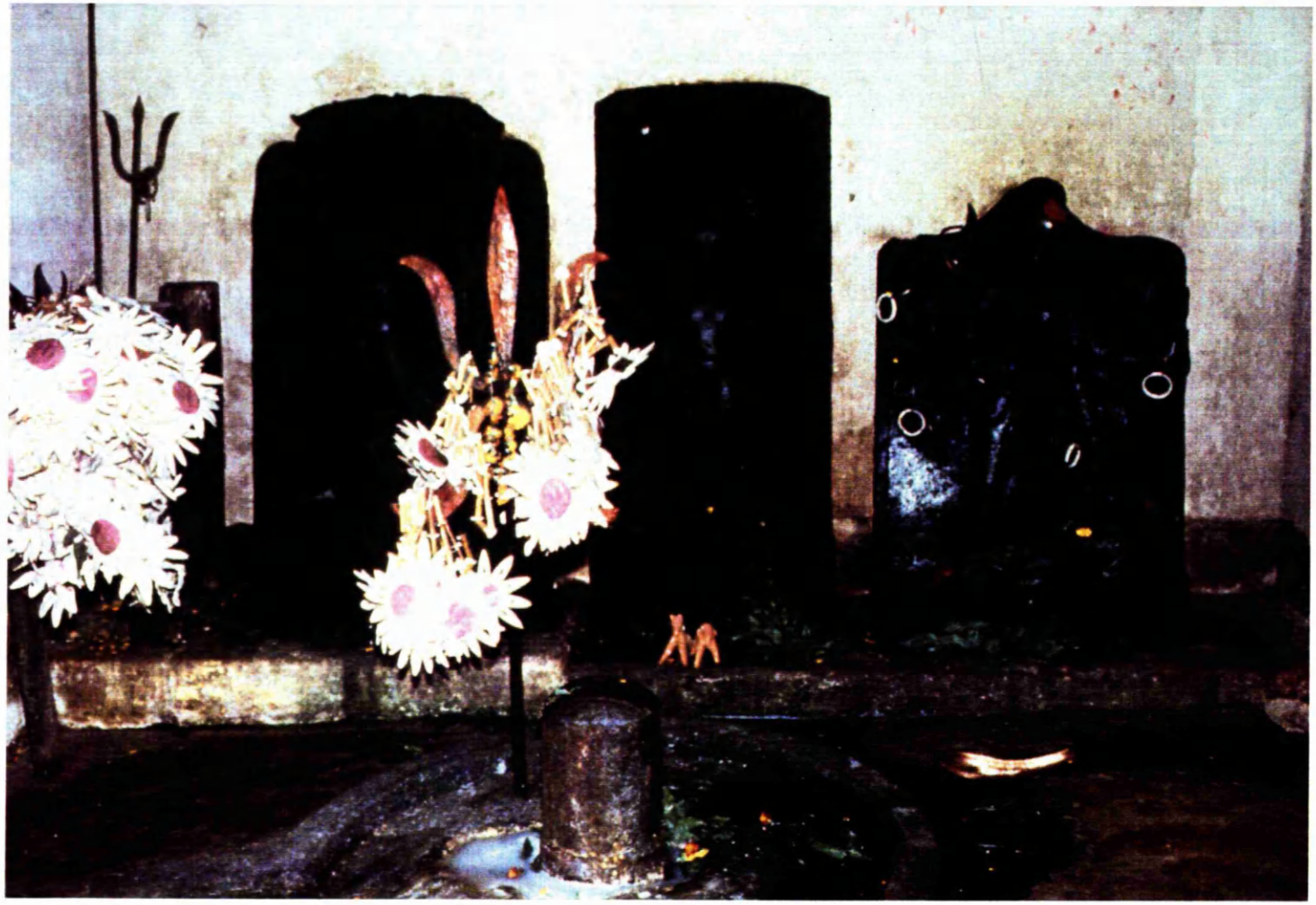

Plate 3.6) Although votive terracotta sculptures are frequently given to deities in local shrines, they are very rarely placed in temples. Exceptions are these horse and elephant figures donated to *Siva* inside the eleventh-century *Siddhisvara* Temple in Bhelulara, Bankura District, West Bengal.

Plate 3.7) Gifts to the goddess *Kālī-Mā* of terracotta elephants are placed in her shrine stituated between two sacred trees on the banks of a pond in Shamdeoria, Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh.

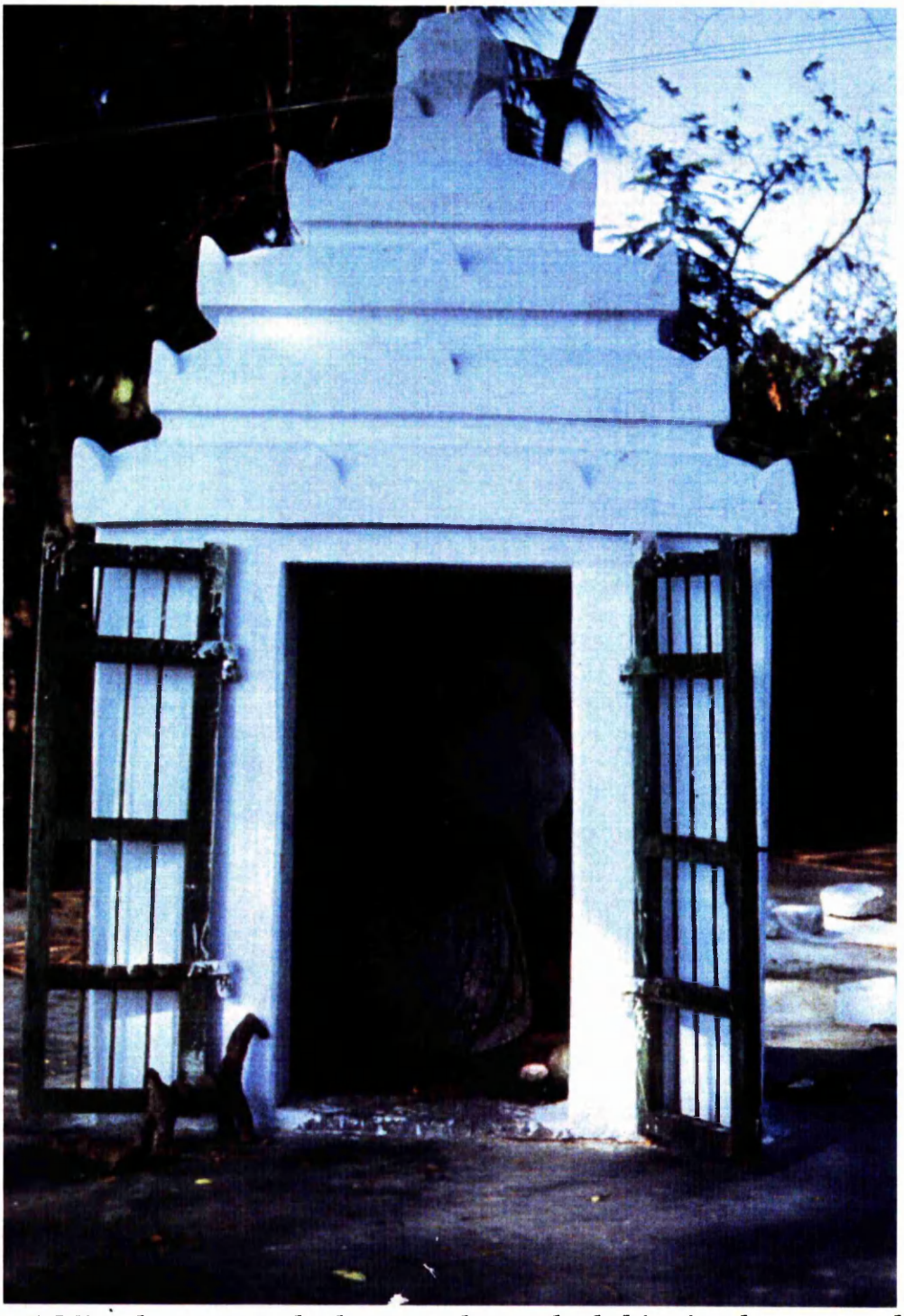

Plate 3.8) Miracles occurred when people touched this simple uncarved stone centuries ago; consequently, it began to be worshipped as the goddess *Burī-Mā*. Now standing inside a small brick shrine and covered with vermilion and daily dressed by a local *pūjārī*, she is regularly given terracotta horses by devotees who seek her divine intervention (Singaspura, Puri District, Orissa).

Plate 3.9) Sometimes the gods themselves are represented by terracotta images, such as this sculpture of *Ayyānar* (the deity who keeps evil spirits away from communities in Tamil Nadu) shown flanked by his two consorts, *Puṣkalā* and *Pūrani* (Thondaimanatham, South Arcot District).

Plate 3.10) The god *Dī-Bābā* is believed to ride the spiritual counterpart of this terracotta horse and rider, a gift from the farmer who owns the fields behind it, to protect the crops from evil and pestilence (Kewanhara, Gorakhpur District, Uttar Pradesh).

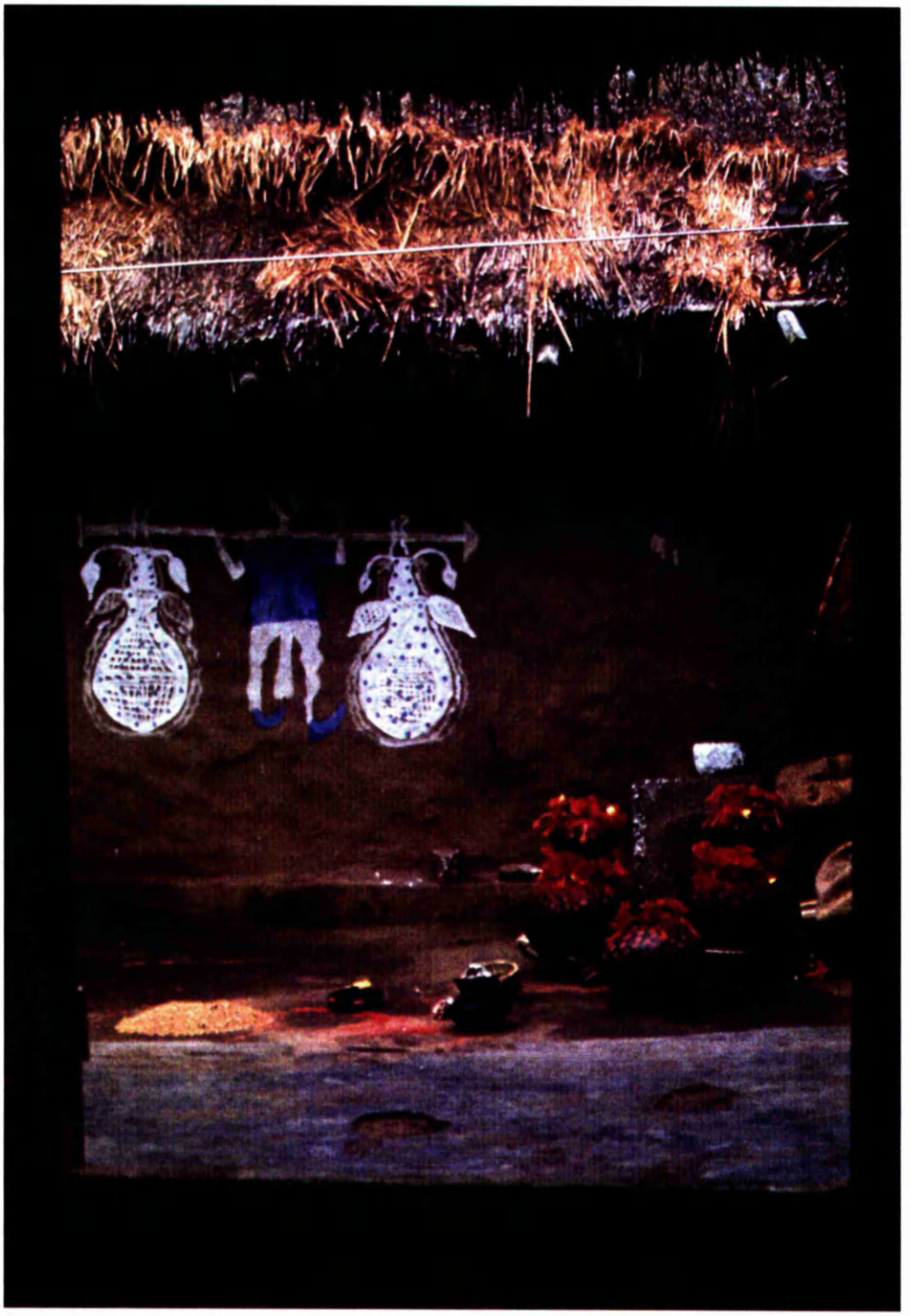

Plate 3.11) Within the family courtyard, vessels containing holy water and offerings of grain have are daubed with *sindūr* (vermilion) and surmounted by red hibiscus flowers during the *Dhola Pūrṇima* festival. After this household ritual, they will be carried to the shrine of *Durgā* in a manner similar to that depicted in the painting behind them (Oraputta, Puri District, Orissa).

Plate 3.12) Terracotta vessels are integral to much of a rural family's activity, both sacred and secular. In the courtyard of an Orissan house, both are in evidence: A cooking pot filled with food rests upon a mud stove, vermilion-daubed sacred vessels await transportation to a shrine, and a pot of milk stands in one corner of the verandah next to upside-down pots not presently required (Oraputta, Puri District).

Plate 3.13) Votive terracottas are ephemeral, of importance only at the moment of giving, when they are believed to be transformed into living beings in the spirit world. Afterwards, they are left to break and dissolve, like these horses given to the goddess *Maṅgala Thākurāṇī* in Athagarh, Cuttack District, Orissa.

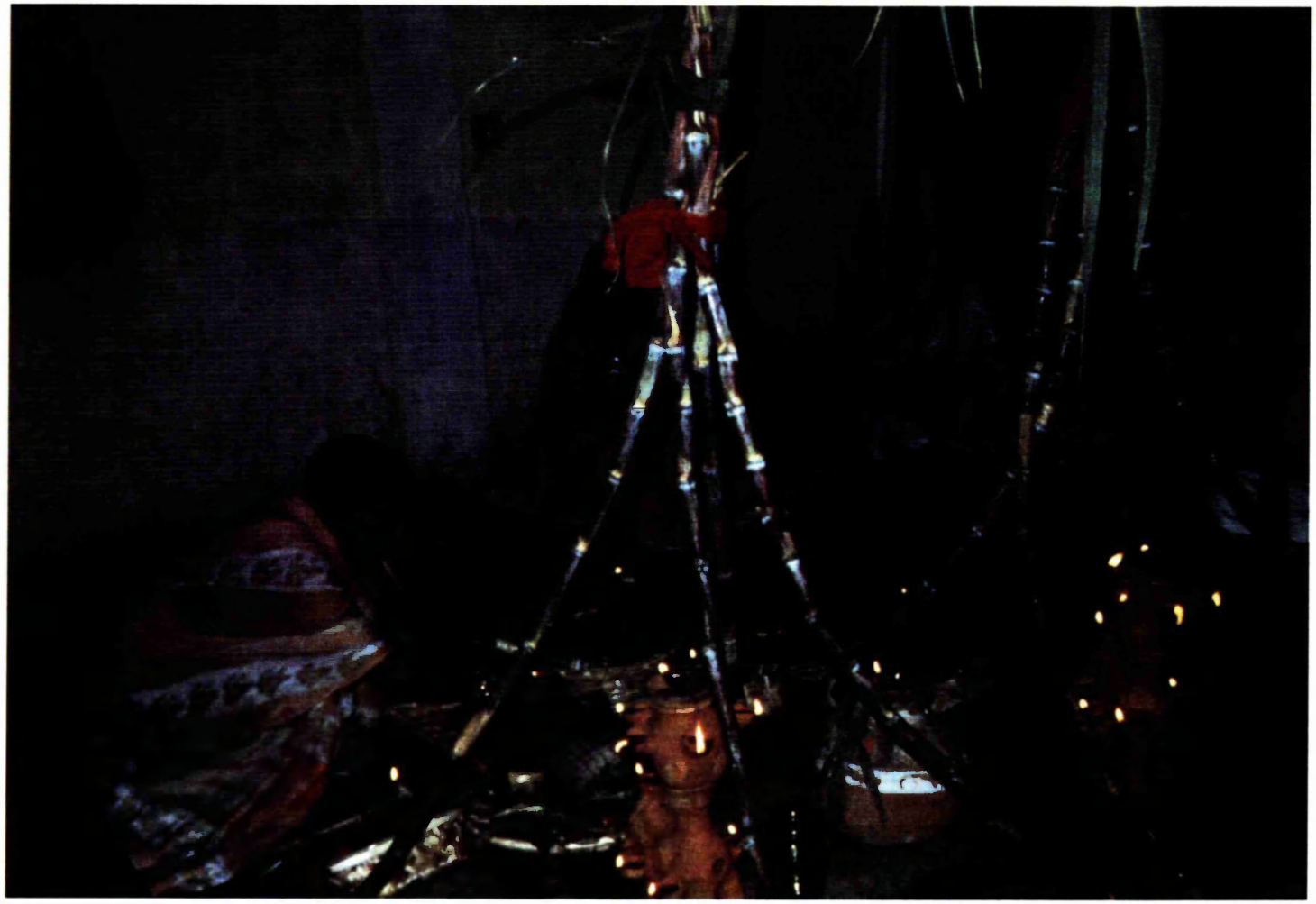

Plate 3.14) On the last night of her *Chattha vrata*, the principal devotee of a household in Patna, Bihar, is joined in her courtyard by members of her family for a night-long vigil of prayers and songs. Offerings of favoured foods are placed before temporary structures of sugarcane enshrining terracotta elephants that carry lighted *dīpas* on their backs.

Plate 3.15) *Dīpas* lighted on the backs of terracotta elephants carry devotees' prayers to *Sūrya* as part of their *Chattha vrata* in Patna, Bihar.

Plate 3.16) Long before dawn on the last day of *Chattha*, each participating family carries offerings to the banks of the Ganges River in Patna, Bihar. Terracotta elephants housed in sugarcane shrines are installed in the river as gifts to the gods, then they are swept away to dissolve in the current.

Plate 3.17) For the final act of *Chattha vrata*, after bathing in the Ganges, devotees stand in the water praying to the rising sun. Their offerings of food are blessed by the deity; and then are taken home to be consumed by the family (Patna, Bihar).

CHAPTER FOUR
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF VOTIVE TERRACOTTA SCULPTURES

What you are, I am;
Today I become your essence
And, giving you,
I become myself.

— A prayer from the *Mahābharāta* regarding the gift of cattle to a shrine[1]

Each area of India has its own distinct styles of terracotta sculptures produced as gifts for the gods. The full range of these would be impossible to catalogue in one volume. Chapters Five, Six, and Seven describe in explicit detail the production and use of terracotta sculptures in three specific areas. This chapter includes varied examples that have been selected from sites throughout the subcontinent in order to show how sculpted clay reflects both continuity and diversity.

West Bengal, India's most densely populated state, is famed for the terracottas produced in Bankura District. Terracotta craftsmen have long been widely respected in Bengal, and many devote their skills solely to sculpting, considering themselves superior to vessel-making potters. For centuries these craftsmen were employed in making the elaborate terracotta bricks used to cover the surfaces of classical Bengali temples, their moulded products depicting the gods and scenes of daily life as well as displaying decorative motifs.[2] With their livelihood threatened through waning

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[1] *Anuśāsana Parva* 75.13, as quoted by Nath pp 213-14.

[2] Many of the craftsmen who traditionally made the moulded bricks used in Bengal's terracotta temples were from a special sect of *Sutradhārs*, carpenters [Skelton p. 58 and Santra p. 53]. Contemporary potters living in Bankura District, West Bengal, an area famous for its brick temples, claim that their ancestors also made the bricks used in these

patronage and a contemporary vogue for concrete temple architecture, the descendants of the potters who sculpted these bricks have developed new markets for mass-produced votive figures, which they ship all over the country. In the mid-1960's Central Cottage Industries Emporium, the major handicraft marketing division of the Government of India, chose the 'Bankura horse' as its logo and began to commission and purchase large orders of terracottas from potters throughout the District. Bankura terracottas rapidly became popular throughout India as decorator items in middle-and-upper class homes and, although other communities continued to produce clay figures, the village of Panchmura, thirty-five miles from Viṣṇupur, became the production centre.[3] Forty families with approximately four hundred working potters[4] live in Panchmura. The major demand is still for their distinctive style of long-necked horses (Plate 4.1), made by most craftsmen in a production line through which they throw at one time the elements (legs, torsos, and heads) for one hundred or more horses (Plate 4.2), allow them to dry, and then join together the elements for each horse, before sculpting the details.[5] In many families, members proficient in particular aspects of the craft, such as throwing or sculpting details, will concentrate largely upon that.

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temples, and these descendants still make sculpted bricks and tiles on commission. This information supports the assumption that Bengali terracotta temples were made by the joint efforts by craftsmen of both *jātis*. The most comprehensive research on this form of architecture is Michell, George, ed. *Brick Temples of Bengal*. For additional information, see Datta, Bimal Kumar *Bengal Temples* , Dey, Mukul *Birbhum Terracottas*, and Ghosh, S.P. *Terracottas of Bengal*.

[3] Sen, Prabhas p 54.

[4] Based upon estimates given by potters in the village. The exact number could not be confirmed.

[5] Each horse is primarily constructed of seven hollow tubes, four of which become the legs, tapered at the feet; a short one sealed at one end becomes the torso; an elongated one joined to the two front legs is the neck, topped with an angled short tube which serves as the head. After details are added by hand, small ventilation holes intended to ensure proper firing are left where the ears and tail belong; these features, fired separately, are added after firing. Except for a fine pre-fire red slip which covers the entire sculpture, Bankura horses are never painted. e.g. Busarbarger and Robins p 42 and Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay* pp 137-138.

Moulds may be used for some repetitive decorative details or for tiles, but most of the work is thrown on the wheel and hand-modeled. Tigers and elephants, as well as images of popular gods such as *Durgā*, *Kālī*, *Gaṇeśa*, *Ṣaṣṭī*, and *Saraswatī*, are also standard products. Women in the families make simple terracotta toys and solid dowel figures of horses and humans which they sell in local *melās*. Although many are made for export, others meet the steady local demand for votive terracottas.

Vratas are integral to religious rituals in Bengal, an essential part of the commitments of most Bengali Hindus to their gods. Many *vratas* require that terracotta sculptures be placed in shrines (Plates 4.3 and 4.4), usually associated with a sacred banyan or pipal tree. Most of these shrines contain no image; some simply honour the tree itself, others are focused upon a sacred stone, and in many the deity is represented only by a *triśūla*. The deities worshipped are varied, depending upon the legends and traditions of the specific locality. Most common are shrines honouring the Mother Goddess, called variously *Mātādevī*, *Mātājī*, simply *Mā*, or *Khandarānī*, the goddesses *Caṇḍi*, *Durgā*, and *Kālī*, and the gods *Śiva*, *Brahma*, and *Dharmarāj*. Horses or elephants are placed in the shrines on festival days, such as *Dussehra*, *Divālī*, and *Makārā Saṅkranti*, and then the devotee regularly visits the shrine to renew offerings of flowers and fruit. A Panchmura potter, Pasupatinath, describes his *vrata*: "A couple of months ago, my calf was ill. I went and prayed to the Goddess *Khandarani* and offered her a terracotta horse. When the calf was well again, I offered the goddess a couple of terracotta elephants. I offered milk, flattened rice, *jaggery* [palm sugar], and money also."[6]

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[6] Quoted in ibid. p 43.

Manasā, the Goddess of Snakes, is popularly worshipped in Bengal for her ability to remove poisons from the body — many diseases are believed to be poisons — and to ensure fertility.[7] Throughout the countryside, shrines to *Manasā* are filled with terracotta sculptures of horses, elephants, tigers, and snakes given as part of local *vratas*.[8] In a common depiction of *Manasā*, called *Manasā ghaṭ*[9] a female bust is added to one side of a clay pot while on the other side, rising behind it, is a snake hood (Plate 4.5). Huge, 1.2-metre-high (four-foot-high) terracotta 'shrines', called *jhad*, are sculpted on commission in Panchmura (Plate 4.6). Constructed by assembling together as many as fifty small and large pieces that have been fired separately using the reduction process, these black *jhad* usually portray, at the top, *Manasā* surrounded by her snakes; in the centre, the six sons of *Cando* (*Śiva*), whom local mythology says she has saved from poisoning; and, at the bottom, three popular forms of the goddess. Although recently gaining popularity as 'works of art' and exported to collectors in Indian urban centres and even abroad, *jhad* are generally made on commission to be installed in *Manasā*'s shrines as collective gifts from entire communities. *Manasā vrata* may be performed at any time to cure snakebite. Otherwise it usually takes place on *Nāga*

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[7] According to the Stutleys [pp 177-178] *Manasā* is "A goddess of snakes, whose cult, probably derived from an archaic form of snake worship, is mainly confined to Bengal and parts of Bihar, Orissa and Assam, and like the snake (*nāga*) cults of South India was initially limited to the unBrāhmanized hill and jungle tribes who lacked political, social and cultural unity and a common language. ...In the early snake-cults the snakes themselves were the objects of worship, whereas in the *Manasā* cult, it was the goddess herself, as their leader and controller, who was worshipped and invoked for protection against them. Thus in India there is 'no single instance of a snake-goddess who is herself not a snake, except that of *Manasā* in Bengal'. ...*Manasā* is closely connected with the earth and nether world, and as a fertility goddess, with marriage rites, the snake being a phallic symbol." See also Srivastava pp 169-171 and Crooke p 384. Ray [pp 37-40] recites the *kathās* (stories) associated with her *vratas* and ends with a translation of *śloka* recited at her *pūjā*: "O goddess *Manasa*! I bow to thee, Mother of *Astik*, sister of *Basukee, Mun Zaratkaru*'s queen beloved, O mother! I bow down my head!"

[8] *Manasā* shrines documented in Midnapur,Vishnupur, Murakhata, Sabarkone, and Avantika.

[9] e.g. ibid. p 137 and Skelton p 60.

Pañcamī (the fifth lunar day of *Śrāvaṇa*, July-August) and is performed by women to heal diseases or to avoid epidemics, requiring arduous penance and fasting.[10]

India has the largest tribal population of any nation, comprising many groups of culturally distinct peoples who are descended from the subcontinent's earliest inhabitants. Most Indian tribals believe that their gods cannot be represented by images. They direct their worship towards natural phenomena, such as rocks, trees, or water, or towards wooden posts or simple clay pots that are intended only as focuses for prayer, not as embodiments of their deities. India's second largest tribe, the *Santals*, live in rural Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Uttar Pradesh, the area of the country's largest population growth, and the rapid encroachment of mainstream Hinduism upon their territories within the past two centuries has greatly altered their traditional culture. The rituals they now practice are a combination of a Hinduised worship of specific deities and their hereditary worship of the power within nature called *Bonga*.[11] They honour the *Bonga* in everything that they do, believing that their lives are inseparable from its

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[10] Haku Shah [*Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay*, p 136] writes that *Manasā* "is commonly worshipped near a tree or shrub which may be a banyan, fig or even a *tulsi* planted in the courtyard or close to the house. She is also worshipped inside the house. There are permanent shrines of *Mansa* (*Manasā*) which are thatched. The *kumbhars* of Bankura worship *Mansa* four times a year in the months of *Magh*, *Phalguna*, *Vaisakh*, and *Shravana*."

[11] Majumdar [p 278] describes *Bonga* as "a power that pervades all space. It is indefinite and impersonal to start with. That is why it is believed to take any shape or form. This power gives life to all animals and plants, it encourages growth in plants, it brings down rain, storm, hail, flood and cold. It kills and destroys evils, stops epidemics, cures diseases, gives currents to rivers, venom to snakes and strength to tigers, bears and wolves. The vague idea of power later on evidences itself and is identified with things or objects of his environment, as the latter is regarded by primitive man as part of himself." For more information on *Bonga*, see Chattopadhyay *Tribalism in India*, pp 181-182; on the Santal in general, see Biswas, P.C. The Santhal. Delhi: Bhartiya, Adimjāti Sevak Sangh, 1956; Blodding, P.O. "Traditions and Institutions of Santals" in Bulletin 6 of the Ethnological Museum, Oslo, Sweden, 1942; Dutta, Majumdar N. The Santal: A Study in Culture Change. Delhi: Government of India Press, 1956; and Risley, H.H. The Tribes and Castes of Bengal. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1891.

influence. Once each year in the winter month of *Pūsa*, the *Santals* of West Bengal honour the spirit of the forests, *Jahar Bonga*, with gifts of simple solid clay horses (Plate 4.7) accompanied by sacrifices of chickens and goats.[12] Before gathering wood or hunting in the forest, they always return to the *Jahar Bonga* shrine to realign themselves with this spirit. In contrast, they place sculpted terracotta heads representing the goddess *Bārā* in her forest shrine at the festival of *Marang Boru* (also called *Bāhā*) in *Caitra* (March-April), accompanied by offerings of fruits and sweets on green leaf *thālīs* (Plate 4.8). These crude heads are sculpted to the *Santals'* specifications by local Hindu potters on inverted wheel-thrown pots, and purchased by the tribesmen in trade for grains, game, or forest produce.[13] Related to the Hindu worship of *Bārā Thākur* (also known as *Dakṣin Dvār*[14]) the *Santals'* goddess *Bārā* is believed to protect her devotees from tigers and evil spirits, to bring fertility to women and to crops, and to protect children.[15]

Clusters of terracotta horses or elephants are found in tree sanctuaries in most regions of Orissa. Often associated with the Mother Goddess, *Mātājī* or *Thākurānī* (literally, Our Lady), or with *Gomidevatā*, the village deities, they are called *Mātā-ghora* (Mother's horses) or *Thākurānī-ghora* (Plate 4.9). Their usual purpose is to ensure healthy crops or to cure family illness.

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[12] Documented at Onda and Asta Sol, Bankura District.
[13] Documented at Asta Sol and at Sabarkone, Bankura District.
[14] *Dakṣin Dvār*, the Guardian of the South, has a tiger as his *vāhana* (vehicle) and is also worshipped throughout Bengal within an image composed of an inverted terracotta pot sculpted into a face. e.g. Pal pp 24-25, Skelton p 59, Ray pp 28-32, Bussabarger and Robins pp 46-47, and Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay*, p 139.
[15] Haku Shah [ibid. p 140] described a similar head made by a potter in Panchmura and stated that in its worship, conducted "every third year, in most houses — but in some, every fourth or fifth year the head of the family offers a goat to the sun god, *Sing Bonga* for the prosperity of the family, especially of the children. The sacrifice is offered at sunrise, in any open space cleaned and purified for the occasion." The *Santals* interviewed for this thesis at *Bārā* shrines in Bankura District (at Asta Sol and at Sabarkone) stated that they never made any live sacrifices to *Bārā*, only fruit, sweets, and flowers, and that these heads were only associated with her worship, not with *Bonga*. *Bonga* is only offered horses and occasionally elephants, but cannot be worshipped within an image.

Commenting on their function, an Orissan village elder said, "Suppose the daughter of the house is ill. We want to invoke the aid of the Mother, and ask Her to come and help us. Surely you cannot expect the Mother to come on foot to visit you. Hence we will go and deposit a horse under Her tree; She will make use of it at dead of night, will by Her magic powers come and ride to our house, and give us Her help and cure the daughter."[16] These horses vary from sculptures a few centimetres high, made of rolls of clay joined together to create simple stick figures, to elaborate images more than a metre high made of elements thrown on the wheel (Plate 4.10).[17] Outside the village of Balikondalo, near Konarak in northeastern Puri District, a square arched stucco shelter holds several sacred stones and well-worn images of *Gaṇeśa*, *Pandabasuni*, *Śiva*, and *Nandi*. Annually simple solid sculptures of horses, approximately 80 mm (seven inches) high made from dowels and pinches of clay are placed before the image of the goddess in gratitude for her protection and healing during the year. Usually black through reduction firing, they are made on commission by local potters (Plate 4.11).[18] More elaborate horse sculptures, approximately 160 mm (fourteen inches) high composed of elements thrown on the wheel, were placed beside the amorphous stone image of the goddess *Maṅgala Thākurānī*, associated with *Kālī*, in a small brick shrine in Athagarh, northwestern Cuttack District (Plate 4.12). Each has been given by a separate family as part of a *vrata* to the goddess. One horse

[16] Quoted in Fabri p 185.

[17] Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [pp 195-199] describe in detail the production process of a wheel-thrown terracotta votive horse in Baxibarigaon, Keonjhar District, Orissa. On p 202 they describe the sacrifice of a goat which accompanied the offering of a terracotta horse to the local *Thākurānī*.

[18] Jambeswar Muduli, a Balikondalo potter, said: "These horse figures are simple to make, they do not require much effort, but they are still important gifts for the goddess. When people take them from us to give to her shrine, then her spirit fills them and they become real." Similar dowel-constructed horses were documented in *Thākurānī* shrines in Jogeswarapura , Bisunadia, Khonant, and Singaspura, Puri District, in Kanatpara, Athagarh, and Goalpara, Cuttack District, and in Jeypore, Koraput District.

was offered in gratitude for receiving a good harvest after the family's fields had long lain fallow, and the other for an anxiously awaited pregnancy after years of infertility. The largest horses, 1010 mm (three-and-a-half feet) high, stand grouped around a sacred pipal tree in Kimbiriguda, southern Puri District. Dedicated to the goddess *Bārābhuiyan*, they have been given by the local inhabitants for a variety of reasons, such as the protection of crops, assurance of a good marriage, the curing of disease, and a good income after a period of unemployment. Situated on the edge of the National Highway between Calcutta and Madras, this shrine is also frequented by motorists and lorry drivers who stop to pray to the goddess for blessings on their travels (Plate 4.13).[19]

An example of gift-giving in its simplest form can be seen in the small, clay images of animals and people that have been tied to the trunk of a palm tree in Ganjam District, Orissa, near the border of Andhra Pradesh (Plates 4.14 and 4.15). As a symbol of sacred fertility, two trees, palm and pipal, were grafted together as saplings to form one base from which both trunks grow.[20]

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[19] A local devotee at the shrine remarked: "She is very good to us, *Barabhuiyan*. So many people have been healed by her and brought good fortune. She has been given so many gifts for this reason. And look, see how many people stop to give *pūjā* at this place. Knowledge of her greatness is taken from end to end of India. And she expresses her gladness of their knowing by helping us, her people who live here."

[20] Grafting sacred trees together is common in South India. Archan [p 10] comments: "Lumps of earth are tied to the trees in the act of making them bear fruit and thereby ensuring one's own fertility. Even today, performing the marriage of trees to ensure fertility is a common practice. ...The peepul and margosa trees are planted side by side. He who performs the marriage ceremony and installs *'Naga'* images under them is believed to be blessed with children and prosperity." Regarding the sanctity of the pipal tree, Crooke [p 407] writes: "The reverence for the Pipal tree (*Ficus Religiosa*) seems to be partly due to the milky juice which exudes from it. It is the *Bodhi* or *Bohū*, the tree of wisdom under which *Buddha* gained illumination. Its roots are *Brahmā*, its bark *Vishnu*, its branches *Siva Mahādeva*. It is worshipped by women as *Vāsudeva-Krishna*, when the new moon falls on a Monday, by pouring water on its trunk, walking around it a hundred and eight times in the course of the sun, and laying at its roots a copper coin, a *Brahmanical* cord, and sweetmeats, all of which are appropriated by beggars. ...The tree is worshipped when a boy is invested with the sacred thread, at marriage, and when the foundation of a house is laid. ...It should be touched only on Sundays when *Lakshmi*, goddess of wealth, abides in it. After a death a perforated water-jar is hung on the branches to refresh the thirsty *Preta*."

As part of their vratas to *Bommula*, a local *grāmadevatā*, village women (not potters)[21] fashion crude sculptures of horses, cows, and childless females, which remain unfired, although brightly decorated with commercial paints. The *pūjā* to *Bommula* takes place once each year in *Kārtika* (October-November), when the devotees bind the figures to the tree trunks, along with painted pots and knotted cloth containing offerings of food and sacred grains, all of which represent spiritual gifts to the deity in gratitude for his bestowal of fertility upon previously childless couples and upon crops after a severe drought.

Votive terracotta sculptures proliferate in Tamil Nadu, where the rich alluvial soil is ideal for sculpting, and terracottas are integral to countless festivals and personal rituals. Clay sculptures created here vary in style and size from rudimentary images of children a few centimetres high to elaborate horses standing five metres (16 feet). (Chapter Five is devoted to detailed descriptions of their production and function.) When construction begins on any Hindu house in Tamil Nadu, whether for a new dwelling, or simply a repair, a figure similar to a scarecrow is erected on a conspicuous spot, generally upon the roof. Intended to frighten evil spirits from the site, these figures often have faces painted on upturned clay water pots (Plate 4.16).The pots usually are ones that have been broken or discarded because of pollution – they contain evil and bad luck themselves and consequently serve to avert it.[22] One such figure on the house of a grocery vendor in VanDīpalliam, South

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[21] Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [p 202] note that Telegu-speaking potters in Orissa do not sculpt terracottas (the potters of this area of Ganjam District are Telugu-speaking).

[22] "When the container's usefulness is finished, it is quickly discarded. The empty old pot, like one that is broken, becomes a symbol of bad luck and evil, a suitable object for mounting on a stick in a field to chase away demons (*pey*) or deflect the evil eye (*kantirushti*) of the envious. *Velar* (potters) make clay images of gnarled and deformed human characters which are hung up to serve the same purpose. Like the old empty or broken pot, these make people quickly turn their gaze away [Inglis *Creators and Consecrators*, p 187]."

Arcot District, carried a wooden sword and was dressed in *kurtā* and *dhoti* opened to reveal a gigantic clay erect phallus painted black (Plate 4.17). The owners of the house claimed that such an aggressive warrior would frighten away any malevolent spirits. Fields all over India, but particularly in the south, are similarly protected from evil (and destructive birds) by clay pots upturned on sticks. Often these pots are simply painted white, or striped[23], but occasionally in Tamil Nadu, they are replaced by leering faces sculpted of clay (Plate 4.18).[24]

Kerala is the only state in peninsular India in which few terracottas are sculpted. The reason may well be that the coarseness of local clay makes sculpting difficult. When compared with the rest of India, pottery is less often used, even in traditional environments, where metal, wood, stone, or even pitched basket vessels replace earthenware. Today modern educated influence has dictated that many traditional vessels be replaced by alluminium, cheap metals, and plastics. Clay *kalaśas*, *ghaṭas*, and *dīpas* are still in use in temples and shrines, and during *Divālī* in *Kārtika* local potters throughout Kerala make simple sculptures of *Lakṣmī*, elephants, and peacocks, among other animals associated with worship of the goddess, each surmounted by a clay *dīpa* which is lighted for the festival of lights.[25] Only two examples of

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[23] According to Crooke [p 92]: "One of the leading village godlings is *Khetrpal*, the field guardian. In his more primitive form he sometimes abides in an earthen jar, marked with white and black stripes, which the farmer fixes on a pole in his field to protect his crops..." He goes on to say [p 278]: "An earthen pot smeared with streaks of black and white, fixed on the thatch, left in the court-yard, or fixed on a pole in the field, is a protection against demons and the Evil Eye, for both in popular belief are often confounded."

[24] Subramaniam, the potter from Panruti, South Arcot District,who sculpted the face in Plate 4.18, commented: "Only sometimes am I asked to make a figure such as this, particularly when the farmer has had some trouble in his fields, when crops will not grow, there is some disease or insect which destroys his crops, or in some other way he believes that evil is attacking his farm. Then he will come to me and ask that I make him a special figure to frighten away that evil (*pey*). Usually in this case he pays me separately from any agreement I may have to supply him with pottery."

[25] Tampy p 7. Besides these sculptures, a new vogue has developed in Kerala for moulded terracotta vases and flowers used as finials for gateposts outside houses.

votive terracotta sculptures are known in Kerala.[26] In Panjala, a village in Cheruthuruthi Tahsil, northeastern Kerala, the *Yajmāna* and *Adhvaya purohits* of the *Nambudiri Brāhman jāti* still continue the ancient *Vedic* ritual of *Agnicayana*, the building of the sacrificial fire altar to *Agni*. Integral to that ceremony are small pots used to hold oblations of milk and fermented toddy wine which are given to the fire, each vessel ornamented with a pair of elemental breasts which the priest claim to be symbolic of the Earth Goddess and an erect phallus symbolic of the male generative power.[27] In sharp contrast are the large and brilliantly painted images representing devotees (Plate 4.19 and 4.20) placed in a *Kālī Koil* (shrine to *Kālī*) at the edge of the small village of Pullikurchi in southeastern Kerala.[28] Standing about 1200 mm (four feet) high, they are constructed in a coil technique by local potters, who otherwise make no other sculptures.[29] Annually commissioned by the entire community they are sculpted to their specifications for donation during

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[26] The author has travelled extensively in Kerala and has found no other terracotta sculptures used in shrines.

[27] Staal, Frits pp 216-240, Mookerjee Plates 34 & 35 and pp 38 & 64, and Jayakar pp 17 & 22.

[28] Jain and Aggarwala [p 175] refer to terracotta images of women offered to *Kālī* in Tamil Nadu for the health of older women. "*Kali* is widely worshipped in Kerala from the Malayalam month of *Vrichchikkam* (Oct-Nov) for nearly five months. Various *BhadraKali pattus* (songs) are conducted. *Kalamezhuthu* — the drawing of the figure of *Kali* — and songs are dedicated to eighteen deities, including *Badrakali, Vetakorumagan, Aryasastav*, etc. The *Kalamezhuthu* is rendered in the characteristic *'panchavarna'* (five colours) of white from rice flour, yellow from turmeric, black from the ash of husk, vermilion and green from the manayola leaves. The *kalams* (floor paintings) are worshipped by the *pujari* and an oracle gets possessed and in the act he rubs off the drawing. The heaps of paddy representing the Goddesses' breasts, indicative of fertility and prosperity, are distributed as *prasad* [Archana p 24]."

[29] When interviewed, these potters said that the images for this shrine were all that they were ever required to make. They denied any knowledge of any other terracotta sculptures being made by other potters in the area (and none were found) and they stated that as far as they knew their ancestors also only made figures for this one shrine. The close proximity of Pullikurchi to the border of Tamil Nadu and the similarity of these sculptures to Tamil votive terracottas would suggest that, although no other shrines with terracotta images dedicated to *Kālī* were found in either state, the traditions of this village are strongly influenced by Tamil culture.

the *Navarātri* festival in the month of *Āśvina* (September-October), replacing the faded icons from the previous year.

Each year, in North Kanara District, in the coastal mountains of Karnataka, farmers discover human terracotta pot figures and heads in their fields when tilling during and after the monsoons. Calling them *Magemuduvudu*, meaning literally 'coming from the earth', they believe that these sculptures have been created by the Mother Goddess herself. Accompanied by gifts of fruit, flowers, and sweets, and occasionally by the sacrifice of a chicken, they reverently place these terracottas in shrines on the edges of their fields or communities (Plate 4.21).[30] A few of these shrines are filled with hundreds of sculptures, although most contain only a dozen or two.[31] The potters working in this area today make only vessels and tiles; none have been found who make pot figures and none of them remember any mention of their being made by their ancestors.[32] This discovery suggests that

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[30] A farmer living near a shrine in Belugundli remarked that each house and every caste in his village brings offerings of milk to worship their *grāmadevatā*, *Hulludevaru*, marked by terracotta heads, on the second Monday of *Mārgaśira* each year. On that day no one, including infants, is permitted to drink any milk before the *pūjā* is complete; while afterwards the *prasād* is made into *paisam* for everyone to share. Referring to his observances of the *pūjā*, Bhat [p 32] commented: "The people residing in the proximity of the site worship these images called *Hulludevaru*, *gadige hullu devaru* or *sateri* on *Saṅkranti* or on Monday of the *Mārgaśiramāsa* (Jan.) every year. This celebration is called by the local people *Hosakkihabba* (celebration of the new rice after harvest). Soon after the harvest, from each household 7 *siddes* (about 2 kgs.) of new rice are collected and cooked in a new pot on the spot. After *Devīsūktaparāyana* and *Kumkumarchane*, the rice is offered (*Naivedya*) to these gods and goddesses. The *Divaru* or *Namadhari* community offer fouls (blood sacrifice) to these deities. It is only after this celebration that the people in the village can use new rice."

[31] For this thesis shrines containing *Magemuduvudu* heads were documented in Kodalagadde, Kantarakan, Bombedevaru Kodalu, Balagimane, Gamadakanu, Haligadde, Hitralli, Krishnanajeddi, Hulekal, Kakkalageri, Kudigundi, Hulase, Mallavale, and Ainkal.

[32] A potter interviewed in the village of Honavar, close to several of the sites documented, stated: "We make only these pots which you see and other vessels required by our customers. Since the time of my grandfather and his father we have only been required to do this type of work. It is for this that people come to us. Those images (*mūrti*) which you are talking about, those were not made by any man. ...No, I do not believe they were made by any member of my family before my great-grandfather. They were made by the goddess." The only exception discovered was in a small *Mastī* (*Satī*) shrine in the village of Hegde where, next to the image stood a new pot--shaped terracotta upon which the elemental suggestion of a face had been modelled. One side of the pot had been left open to contain a *dīpa*. (Plate 4.22). Although there may be some similarity, those complete *Magemuduvudu*

they are relics from an earlier time; their diverse shapes and styles imply a long history of development.[33] Variety exists even within a small shrine containing figures gathered from a single group of fields. Many of these sculptures are crudely fashioned – simple daubs and pinches of clay pressed onto wheel-thrown pots to approximate the features of faces, breasts, and limbs (plates 4.23 and 4.24); some are finely and sensitively crafted, indicating the sophistication of a refined culture; still others appear to bridge the two (Plate 4.25). Six heads affixed around the top perimeter of a large half-buried upturned terracotta pot, 510 mm (twenty inches) high (Plate 4.26), comprise the image of *Devīmane*, the goddess worshipped in an open air jungle shrine at Haligadde. Local villagers claimed no knowledge of the meaning of the six heads, or any legends attached to the goddess. She had just risen from the clay in that form in the last century, and they give her *pūjā* for the protection of their crops.

Less than one hundred kilometres away, in the large town of Kharwar, the potter Vitoba Kumbhara Gunigi makes horses and riders by joining nine solid dowels of clay: five long rolls to become the legs and body of the horse, two medium-sized rolls to make the horse's head and the rider's body, and two small rolls for the arms (Plate 4.27). A few pellets of added clay become the

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pot figures in other shrines are shaped differently and contain no recess, aperture, or fixture for a lamp. In Hegde the *Mastī pujārī* and the potter who made the pot figure both insisted that it was simply a *dīpa*, and not an image.

[33] Many of the pot figures are remarkably similar to pot figures excavated from Kusan sites in the Gangetic Plain, particularly at Kausambi. To date, no archaeological excavations have been conducted at these sites, and no scientific dating attempted. Four local scholars have noted some of the shrines: A. Sundara, Shivarama Karanth, Gangadhara, and H. R. Raghunath Bhat. Bhat, who published a brief (but only existing) analysis of the images believes [pp 32-34] that the terracotta heads might originally have been used in Jain rituals. He noted that in the nineteenth century accounts of the Jain *Bandī Habbā* festival in North Kanara devotees were recorded dancing with figurines on their heads. Today in the same festival metal *kalaśas* capped with silver or bronze heads of Jain deities are similarly carried in procession on the heads of devotees. Bhat suggests that the ancient pot figures may have been used in similar rituals.

tail, ears, and bridal for the horse and the eyes, nose, and mouth of the rider. Each year the townspeople buy these figures by the hundreds to give to the goddess *Bandī* at the *grāmadevasthāna* (local shrine) in nearby Bandissiti village (Plates 4.28 and 4.29). She is honoured at the *Bandī Habbā* festival in late April, when thousands of townspeople and farmers from nearby villages converge on the shrine for a *melā*. Many of these devotees carry clay horses, baskets of fruit, and chickens to be given as offerings to *Bandī*. As part of the *pūjā*, as many as a thousand roosters, as well as four or five sheep, are sacrificed every year, their blood smeared upon the stone image of the goddess as it stands outside on its plastered laterite-block plinth. At her feet and all along the platform are arranged a herd of terracotta horses, gifts in gratitude for her blessing and protection during the year.[34] On commission, the same potter throws on his wheel a ridged cylinder, one end of which he tapers down to a small hole, and the other end sculpts into a toothy snarl. By adding four stumpy legs to one side, a long tail from the small end up to the head on the other side, and pinches of clay for ears, a nose, eyes, and a tongue at the large end, Vitoba creates a sculpture of a tiger. Late in the new moon night of *Caitra* (March-April), lighted by clay *dīpas* carried upon the heads of all the women, everyone in the community, except for *Brāhmans*, gathers at the nearby *Guttimbir* shrine. On a plinth before the stone images of *Brahma*, *Gutalabaru*, and *Bhanta*, the fierce tiger goddess, *Hulidevaru*, is propitiated

[34] Vitoba commented: "Usually I make these horses only in preparation for *Bandī Habba*. I must begin preparing them only one month in advance. During that time I still make vessels as needed, but not as many as I generally make. At one time I usually fire two or three hundred horses in one (temporary) oven. Many of the horses I provide as part of my standard agreement (*jajmānī*) with my local customers, but I also sell them alongside my pots in the town market."

with food, sacrifices, and the terracotta tigers to implore her to keep these dreaded beasts from injuring anyone in the community.[35]

Most Hindus participate in major festivals that require the purchase of votive terracottas representing gods. These sculptures are often mass-produced in moulds that leave little room for individual artistic expression.[36] Potters in Paithan, Maharashtra, use four-piece moulds to create sculptures of all the primary Hindu gods and goddesses (Plate 4.30), but they also produce popular cult images such as Air India's emblem (the bowing maharajah) and portraits of film stars.[37] In common with other such images elsewhere in India, all of these sculptures, including the religious icons, are brightly painted after firing and before being sold locally or shipped to urban markets (Plate 4.31). Although made by members of a traditional family of *Kumbhars*, they are the products of a commercial endeavor and are sold on a cash basis only, not a part of *jajmānī* transactions.[38] Many of the terracottas unearthed in ancient Indian sites were similarly moulded and mass-produced, which suggests that they may also have been used as festival images.[39] An increasing number of potters manufacture images of popular festival gods to avail themselves of ready sources of income (Plate 4.32).

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[35] The *pujārī* at the shrine remarked that *Hulidevaru* is only worshipped at this one festival in the year. Otherwise, regular *pūjās* are made to *Brahma*, *Bantī*, and particularly to *Gutalabara*, the *grāmadevatā* of Kharwar. Only a few terracotta tigers are given to *Hulidevaru* each year, although earlier this century many more were given. These tigers are placed at the roots of the pipal tree to the edge of the shrine and allowed gradually to disintegrate, their energy absorbed by the goddess during the *pūjā*.

[36] The techniques of mass-producing festival terracottas through the use of moulds were documented in Vandipalliam, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu, Paithan, Maharashtra, Poonda Negala, Aligarh District, Mathura and Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, and Midnapur, West Bengal.

[37] Descriptions of the process of moulding terracottas may be found in Behura pp 186-187 and Gupta pp 8-12.

[38] All the potters surveyed who make moulded terracottas stated that they rarely exchange terracottas as part of *jajmānī*, although some of the less urbanized potters would accept payments of grain or produce.

[39] Numerous duplicate moulded terracottas dating from the *Sunga* and *Kuśan* Periods (first and second centuries B.C. through the first century A.D.) have been found in sites throughout the Gangetic Plain. Identical terracottas have often been excavated in locations

Although these commercial sculptures predominate at such festivals, potters in most areas still make some terracotta images of gods by hand. Throughout Maharashtra the festival of *Gaṇeśa Caturtī* (also called *Vināyaka Caturtī*) honouring *Gaṇeśa* takes place on the fourth night of the bright half of *Bhādrapada* (August-September). *Gaṇeśa* is worshipped at this time that he might by the austerities observed and the honour given to him, bless the household, remove any obstructions to the maintenance of harmony within the family and to any planned activities such as marriages, births, or thread-tying ceremonies in the coming year, and generally avert calamity or evil spirits. Terracotta images of *Gaṇeśa*, whether moulded, thrown on the wheel or sculpted entirely by hand, are purchased from the local potter and brought into each home for the *pūjā* (Plate 4.33).[40] The image is placed upon a temporary altar in the home, given offerings of grains, sweetmeats, flowers, and incense, and *ślokas* are recited to it. An officiating *Brāhman purohit* is preferable to conduct the *pūjā* and recite the *ślokas*, but he is not a perquisite.[41] At the commencement of the ritual the *pujārī* calls the life force (*jīva*) down into the image and the terracotta is believed to actually become the god for the duration of the ceremony. If properly enacted, the devotees believe that they become one with his divine energy.[42] Once the image is

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hundreds of miles apart. e.g. Poster pp 34-36, 38-39 & 94-118, Kala pp 15-50, Dhavalikar pp 25-29 & Plates 27-38, and Gupta pp 35-59 & Plates 61-153. Multiple-moulded terracottas were popular during the synchronous *Satavahana* period in the Deccan, e.g. Dhavalikar pp 30-34 & Plates 40-54 and Poster pp 37-38 & 114-115.

[40] Unfortunately an aberration in the camera used resulted in no photographs of the images or the ritual. The photograph in Plate 4.33 is a clay *Gaṇeśa* made for the same ritual in Bellary District, Karnataka.

[41] In the past decade cassette recordings of *Gaṇeśapūjā ślokas* recited by *Brāhmans* are readily available throughout Maharashtra and in common use [Courtright p 38].

[42] "As the priest recites the *mantras* the patron touches two sprigs of *dūrva* (sacred grass) to the image. Then the priest says, 'This *prāṇa* is the *prāṇa* of the god.' In this way the distributed *prana* of the cosmos, not insignificantly including that of the ritual patron, becomes condensed into the inert clay image bringing it to life. A similar pattern is followed invoking animating life (*jīva*) into the image. At this moment the separation between the patron and the deity in a religious sense dissolves and they share common support in *prāṇa*.

invested with life and breath, it is treated with the same honour accorded to a cherished guest: it is bathed, fed, and cared for. The sixteen *upacāras* (ritual acts) are performed, most important of which are the *abhiṣekha* (bathing the image) and the *naivedya* (offering of food). After meditation and invocations, the image is washed with holy water and a sacred thread (*upavastra*) placed on its torso, then it is dressed in *khadi* cloth and adorned with jewels. A *dīpa* is lighted and waved over the image and then *Gaṇeśa* is offered fruit, sweetmeats, sacred leaves, and a coin. Finally the *pujārī* circumambulates the image, makes a gesture of *namaskāra*, and the invocation ceremony is finished. Next the entire family joins in the *pūjā*, a *dīpa* is again waved in front of the image, devotional hymns sung to his praise, camphor lighted, sacred grasses and leaves placed before the deity, and prayers recited. With this act, *Gaṇeśa* is believed to be fully present and welcomed within the household.[43] He may be a 'guest' within the home for any period up to ten days, during which time he is accorded simple *pūjās* every morning and evening. On the final day, a simple ritual (*uttarapūjā*) takes place with more *ślokas* and offerings of flowers and food. The *pujārī* then symbolically closes the eyes of the image with sacred *dūrva* grass and recites an invocation asking *Gaṇeśa* to depart. The jewels and cloth are taken off the image and, in the

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This is a moment of profound metaphysical and religious significance, and is the crux of the liminal phase of the rite. ...Some informants claimed that the image actually changes, it become lustrous, its colors becoming more radiant. Others said actually saw it enlarge slightly [ibid. pp 44-45]."

[43]Courtright [ibid. p 38] describes the intimacy achieved between devotee and deity in *Gaṇeśapūjā*: "The worshiper prepares a sacred arena, provides a clay image (*mūrti*), and establishes the deity's presence in that image by invoking the life-force (*jīva*) and vital capacities (*indriya*) into it. This process of invocation includes the transfer of his own *jīva* and *indriyas* into the image. It is as though *Gaṇeśa* were condensed from his dispersed universal presence in the cosmos into a particular, immediate, and accessible form, sharing a time and a place with the devotee. The worshiper then honors *Gaṇeśa*-in-the-image by bathing, feeding, clothing, and giving the god gifts, and by entertaining him with songs; in short, honoring him as the most valuable and royal of guests. *Gaṇeśa* reciprocates by using his obstacle-removing powers to watch over the family and kin group during the coming year."

last act of *Gaṇeśapūjā*, the family carries their terracotta in procession with members of other families carrying their images to a nearby river or temple tank, where they immerse it in the water to dissolve.[44]

Over the last several centuries, many western Indian tribes, particularly the *Bhils* and those associated with them, have begun to assimilate the rituals of their neighbouring Hindus, including the iconic worship of their own gods and of selected Hindu gods. Among these rituals is the observance of vows that incorporate terracotta gifts and images. In this region there are no tribal potters.[45] Although the tribesmen of some areas, particularly in southern Gujarat, fashion figures out of clay, they do not fire them or work on the wheel.[46] Most tribes commission Hindu potters to create the vessels and images they need. These potters live in symbiotic relationship with the tribes, producing sculptures tailored precisely to tribal aesthetics in return for lucrative livelihoods in a time difficult for potters elsewhere.[47]

On the border of Madhya Pradesh and southwestern Gujarat, many tribes (such as the *Bhil, Bhilala, Bhangi, Rathva, Koli, Dhanaka,* and *Naika*) give terracottas to their shrines. Local tribal lore describes horses as the gods' favourite creatures, and so images of these animals predominate.[48] The

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[44] Describing this immersion ritual (*visarjana*), Courtright [p 49]says: "The *visarjana* brings full circle the process begun with the forming of the clay image and its installation in the home. The life of the image moves from formless clay to iconographic representation to animation and empowerment to dispersion and return to formlessness. In this respect it replicates the cosmological cycle itself. As the devotees lower their clay image of *Gaṇeśa*, now emptied of his *prana*, into the water, they shout in unison the familiar stanza in Marathi, *Gaṇapati Bāppā Morayā, Pudhacyā varṣī lavkar yā*! ('*Gaṇeśa*, Lord of Moraya [Morayā Gosavi, the founder of the lineage of *Gaṇeśa* saints in Maharashtra], come again early next year!')"

[45] Few tribal potters exist anywhere in India except in the far northeastern part of the country bordering Myanmar (Burma).

[46] e.g. Fischer and Shah "Treatment Against Ghosts and Spirits: the Bhagtai-ceremony of the Chodhri Tribe in Gujarat" pp 51-60.

[47] Blurton p 67 and Kramrisch *Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, p 51.

[48] Referring specifically to tribal terracottas, Shah [Votive Terracottas of Gujarat, p 15] says: "Of all the clay figures offered, the horse is paramount. For many reasons the horse is considered next only in importance to man, and it has become in the course of time a symbol of the utmost significance. The horse is considered a family god and is believed to be virtue-

malevolent spirits of ancestors, believed to cause many family disasters and difficulties, have their own sanctuaries where they may be placated with offerings of clay horses. Most terracottas, however, are given to the shrines of tribal gods. As in Hinduism, the names, identities, and legends of the tribal gods vary from one area to another. For instance, an ancient banyan tree on the outskirts of Ambua, Dhar District, western Madhya Pradesh has wrapped its roots around a huge, vermilion-daubed rock that is worshipped as *Bhilalabābā*, the principal deity of the *Bhilala* tribe (Plate 4.34). At its base are a few votive pots and several horse figures painted white. On the edge of farmlands outside Baliguda, a village in the adjoining Jabhua District, under a pipal tree a stone slab representing the Bhilala god *Kundīpa* is surrounded by dozens of small white horses (Plate 4.35). Just across the border of Gujarat in Baroda District, one hundred and ten kilometres further west, on a hilltop near the village of Ambala, members of the Rathva tribe place hundreds of larger horses, and a few elephants, in herds around wooden posts (*colia*) representing *Gamdev*, the spirit of the forests (Plate 4.36).[49] As exemplified by these figures, the major elements of most terracottas in this region are thrown on the wheel and assembled into abstract sculptures.[50] Each large horse, such as those common in Baroda District, is composed of a big open-ended cylindrical body, to which are attached four long tubular legs, a perpendicular tube-neck, and an elongated cylindrical head. Strips and

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bestowing. It is said that if a vow has been made to the Mother Goddess and not kept, she will come to you in a dream, sit on your chest and ask: 'Why did you not give me the horse you promised me?' "

[49] In Dhar and Jhabua Districts, Madhya Pradesh, ten tribal shrines were documented (at Badaguda, Ambua, Ambari, Chandpur, Jobat, Jirpania, and Alirajpur) and in the Chota Udaipur region of Baroda District, Gujarat, eight shrines were documented (at and near Ambala, Deohati, Chota Udaipur town, Jaban, and Jenhre).

[50] These terracottas are surprisingly similar stylistically to those made in Gorakhpur and Deoria Districts, Uttar Pradesh (see Chapter Six).

pinches of clay are added to become headgear, a saddle, harnesses, ears, eyes, and a tail (Plate 4.37).[51] Although some large horses and elephants similar to those found in shrines in Baroda District may be seen in tribal shrines in Jhabua and Dhar Districts, the potters interviewed in these districts stated that their customers usually prefer smaller figures, for which only the open pot-shaped body is thrown on the wheel, and solid rolls or pellets of clay are used for the neck, legs, head, and smaller features.[52] The terracotta horses, or other animals, represent gifts to the gods in gratitude, or sometimes in supplication, for their protection against evil spirits and ghosts. Tribesmen in this area believe that much of their bad fortune is the result of the discontented and malevolent ghosts (*bhūtas*) of dead relatives and neighbours, the response to evil spells cast by sorcerers and witches, or the object of demons and evil gods. Illness (such as cholera, typhoid, malaria, hepatitis, dysentery, bronchitis, influenza, or pneumonia), physical ailments (such as arthritis, rheumatism, ulcers, headaches, or migraines), sexual disorders (such as difficulties in pregnancy, severe menstrual cramps, impotency, or prostate problems), psychological dysfunctions (such as psychosis, schizophrenia, extreme depression, or retardation) and natural catastrophes (such as that caused by flooding, drought, fire, and crop or livestock diseases) are all considered the product of malign gods, ghosts, or black magic. Each tribal community's own *grāmadevatā*, whose name and legends are specific to each community, is implored for protection against these malevolent forces, and in many rituals the gift of a horse is only the

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[51] Sculpting potters were documented in Bodeli and Deohati, Baroda District. Richard Blurton [p 69] documented that occasionally a whole tribal village will join resources to commission a single large terracotta to be given to the deity for the benefit of the entire community.

[52] Sculpting potters were documented in Chandpur, Jhabua District, and Ambua, Dhar District.

final act of gratitude after the devotee has undergone days, weeks, or months of arduous ritual preparation, invocation, prayer, and penance. The *badvo* (tribal priest) is consulted about all problems; invariably, he instructs a ritual of atonement involving vows to the gods or spirits. The complexity of the ritual depends upon the magnitude of the request: Some ceremonies are small, requiring only that the concerned person give offerings of terracottas, suitable food, oils, incense, and money to the shrine. Others demand the organization of a village festival with invitations sent to friends and relatives. On such an occasion, the villagers are led by musicians, the *badvo*, and the headman to the house of the potter where specially commissioned terracottas are paid for with grain, coconuts, liquor, poultry, and money (Plate 4.38). Often a prayer is said to transfer the ownership of the sacred sculptures from their creator to the devotee.[53] Then the terracotta horses, elephants, and human figures are carried to the shrine in a jubilant procession of singing and dancing villagers (Plate 4.39; see also Plate 3.1). The tribesmen give their terracottas to the god in accordance with their vows, accompanied by the offerings (incense, lamps, coins, food, chickens, and perhaps a goat) that each devotee has promised. Offerings of food and flowers, and often a lighted *dīpa* may be placed inside the open cavity within the terracotta animal's

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[53] Regarding the relationship between potter and patron, Shah [Living Traditions of India: Crafts of Gujarat, p 140] comments: "The terracottas are imbued with a life of their own and the act of creating the terracotta is a ritual performed by the creator as well as by the family which commissions the making of the offering. The journey to the potter's house is begun with an invocation to the deity to whom the terracotta is offered and the commissioning of the potter is yet another stage of the ritual, which is then taken over by the potter and is his responsibility until he has completed the work. Once the potter has been paid by offering a sacrificial bird, a set of clothes and money, the ritual responsibility shifts to those who have commissioned him and who carry the ceremony of the offering to its final stage." In *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay* [p 26] Shah states further: "And when the tribal comes to buy a terracotta elephant or horse, a ritual begins. A lamp is lit, and offered to the figure, 'prasad' of coconut is served to it and to all who are there and only then is the figure lifted. When the potter bids farewell to the terracotta, it is a real sight. He himself puts it on the tribal's head or shoulder, and the tribal carries it with great care and devotion. Even a small crack in the figure would upset the ritual."

chest.[54]The pitch of song and dance is heightened as the *badvo* goes into trance, and prayers are proffered to all the *Bhilala* gods and spirits. When the ritual is over, the sacrificial food, now blessed by the god, is divided among those present to be taken home and eaten, in a process reminiscent of Hindu ceremonies.[55]

Bhil tribesmen often travel several hundred kilometres to the Rajasthan village of Molela, near Nathdwara, in order to purchase terracottas from their favourite potters, the *Maru*. The *Maru* are well known for their clay relief sculptures depicting images of tribal gods and mythic heroes on large, dome-topped plaques (Plates 4.40 and 4.41). The eighteen potting families who work in this village of four thousand[56] believe that their work is sacred, that concentration is essential while they sculpt, or else their 'clay will turn to water'. Many are convinced that their images would crack if they were made beyond the boundaries of Molela.[57] They dig their clay at two nearby sources, one of which is a sacred spot on the banks of the Banas River, and mix it with a one-fourth portion of donkey manure.[58] To produce a plaque of the popular equestrian hero-god *Dharmarāj* , for example, the potter Mohanlal first makes a large rectangular slab of clay, then shapes the top into a dome defined by a raised edge. He sculpts the figure entirely with his fingers, building the bodies of the horse and rider in thin arches from the base pallet by adding strips and pinches of clay. (The figure must be hollow so it will not

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[54] Jain in Swaminathan, Jain and Shah p 126.
[55] Shah *Votive Terracottas of Gujarat*, p 20.
[56] In 1967, Reeves [p 57] recorded that of twenty families of *Kumhars* in Molela, nineteen families (56 males and 37 females) were occupied with the craft of sculpting terracotta plaques.
[57] Harmalkar pp 12 &14.
[58] Harmalkar [p 70] recorded that before digging clay, the Molela potters carry terracotta images of their deities *Dharmarāj, Kala Gora Bhairanāth*, and others to the quarry site and perform pūjā to them, asking their permission to excavate the clay and create new sculptures.

burst in the kiln.) Finished with decorations of harnesses and jewellery, made from tiny balls of clay, the plaque is dried for nine days before being fired in a temporary kiln along with as many as fifty other plaques.[59] After firing, the plaque may be left plain or painted with a mixture of natural and commercial paints, depending upon the wishes of the customer.[60]

The primary images which the Molela craftsmen sculpt are local folk and tribal deities and legendary heroes. The Goddess is depicted in many forms, such as *Narpado Mātā* (*Chamunda*), *Durgā Mātā, Machhlīwālī Mātā, Sūr Mātā, Kalka Mātā, Ambā Mātā, Narsiṅgh Mātā, Awari Mātā, Sadu Mātā, Heda Mātā*, each with its own symbols and *vāhanas* (e.g. *Machhlīwālī Mātā* rides a fish, *Narpado Mātā* a buffalo, *Sur Mātā* a boar, and *Narsiṅgh Mātā* a lion). Among the many male gods, the chivalric *Dharmarāj* rides a horse, holding a spear and lotus, and may be shown with any of many symbols associated with his legends: peacocks, cows, a sun and moon, a shepherd, a crocodile, or a *nāga*. *Sanvaro Babo*, the most popular god of the *Bhil* tribe, is depicted riding an elaborately comparisoned horse, carrying a club and a bag for collecting alms and a water pot (*loṭa*). Beneath his feet are a lion, cow, goat, and dog, all associated with his legends, while behind him are images of *Venugopāla* and *Rādhā*. Usually in the upper corners are a conch and bell and a sun and moon. Other male deities depicted in clay are *Paṅkhi-Gora Bhairon*,

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59 Kumar "Terracotta" p 185.

60 "The images are coloured after they are baked in the kilns. First of all white wash (*chunam*) is given to the image from top-downwards, with the help of cloth brush. The sequence of using colours is also striking. Yellow colour is applied with the help of goat hair brush. Then follow *Gora (red)*, then *Hadmas* followed by *Neela* (blue), *Hara* (green) and finally the black colour. The principle behind the sequence of colours is 'from light to dark'. Different brushes are used for different colours [Harmalkar p 86]." Silver leaf, purchased in the market in Nathdwara, is used to decorate the sacred symbols and crowns of the gods. The paint is then given a shiny varnished (*sandreś*) surface using a preparation of linseed oil mixed with the boiled sap of the *babūl* (thorny mimosa) tree.
Although simpler and fired at a much lower temperature, the *Maru* sculptures are the contemporary counterparts of the terracotta plaques made in the *Gupta* Period (A.D. 300-500) to adorn the exteriors of temples (e.g. Dihejia pp 43-52).

Bhunaji and *Mahenduji, Rewari Dev,* and *Gaṇeśa. Nāgadeo* or *Takhaji* is the the tribal serpent god, portrayed as a coiled snake sculpted with one, three, five, seven, nine, or twelve hoods, and frequently shown flanked by his two anthropomorphic wives.[61] Besides these plaques, the *Maru* also sculpt three-dimensional figures of the goddess *Gaurī* and her consort *Iśar* to be sold to Hindus throughout the Mewar region for use in the *Gaṇgaur* festival, and non-religious toys to be sold to children at *melās* in nearby Nathdwara and Udaipur.[62]

The principal tribal customers of the *Maru* are the *Bhils,* the *Gujars,* and the *Garijats,* who usually visit Molela once each year in the month of *Māgha* (January-February). Members of each tribal community are accompanied by their priest, who helps them choose the appropriate image.[63] Chaturbhujlal, an old *Maru* potter, said, "Because a particular god fulfils their wishes, they buy his idol, otherwise why would they ever buy?"[64] When an icon is selected, the potter is paid with ten rupees, twenty-five paise (34

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[61] According to Kumar ["Terracotta Icons of Molela", p 89]: "It is a common belief in the Mewar region that the benevolent spirit of the ancestor is reborn in the form of a serpent; thus the name of the serpent god varies from place to place and has its own folklore everywhere. The serpent moving in a winding course on the ground like a river, dwelling within the earth and coming forth like a fountain, represents the mysterious fertile and productive power of the earth. According to the belief of tribal peoples, the serpent typifies those energies in the hidden recesses of the ground that keep the nourishing waters of life flowing; and it is regarded, therefore, as the guardian of the fertilising element as well as the other treasures of the earth."

[62] Examples of Molela sculptures may be seen in Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Earth* pp 130-133 and Kumar "Terracotta Icons of Molela" pp 90-91.

[63] Reeves [p 58] noted: "The potters of Molela have worked out what might be called a business convention whereby their customers are not free to purchase these terracotta plaques from a potter of their own choice, but from one whose turn it is to sell them. The potters have fixed the following *modus operandi* of this scheme amongst themselves: the first customer must purchase the plaque he wants from the number one potter; the second customer must place his order with the second potter whose turn it is, and so on. Then when all the potters have sold a plaque each, again the first potter's turn will come around. In this way the earnings of all the potters remains virtually the same. The customer comes to the potter on foot and goes back on foot. He may stay with the potter from a minimum of one night up to three nights, and during that time, the potter provides his client with bedding and one meal a day."

[64] Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay,* p 37.

pence or 57 cents), five kilograms (11 pounds) of grain, and one and one-fourth metres (4 feet) of cotton cloth (red cloth if a female deity is purchased, white if male). Instructing his companions to carry the image, the priest, in trance, leads them on the long walk home, stopping at the Banas River on the way to pray to the image. Once they have reached their village, they carry the plaque to each home in the community to familiarize the god with the territory and people he or she must protect. Then, after a night of prayers, songs, and rituals, the image is installed at dawn in its new shrine.[65]

Molela terracottas have recently gained a broad market, and some *Maru* potters have demonstrated their production techniques in major Indian cities as well as in Britain, Europe, America, and Japan. This exposure to new environments and to a wider clientele has had a profound effect upon the style of the plaques. Although the potters still produce the votive images required by their *Bhil* customers, naturally they are more interested in creating the higher-paying exports. Their plaques hang as decorator accents in houses, restaurants, and hotels throughout India. Catering to this new demand, Molela potters now sculpt gigantic plaques as much as twenty times larger than those they make for their tribal clientele (Plate 4.42). The production technique remains the same, although a much larger kiln must be used. The new panels are superb works of art, but their subject matter is entirely divorced from its parent tradition of votive tribal terracottas. Instead, they

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[65] Kumar "Terracotta Icons of Molela", p 92. Reeves [p 58] comments: "The terra-cotta plaques are enshrined in the village ...as family deities (*Kuldevatās* or *Kuldevis*) by erecting a rectangular platform of masonry work against a wall three feet higher than the plinth of the platform. These unroofed shrines are usually built under trees. The terra-cotta plaque is embedded in an upright position in the middle of this wall. More than one deity may also be enshrined, in which case small painted terra-cotta plaques called *intas*, which carry the impression of lord *Krishna's* hand in the *Abhaya Mudrā* (the blessing posture), are embedded on either side of each deity's plaque. The small plaques might be said to indicate a respectful pause on the part of the devotee before leaving the main deity and going on to pay homage to those deities on either side."

depict local genre scenes from neighbourhood Rajasthan and even impressions of the distant cities these craftsmen now visit. The income generated from this new popularity has substantially improved the potters' lives and even their social position within Molela. Also, the numbers of potters working there have increased in recent years, as opposed to the relative decrease in numbers in most other parts of the country. The production of single extended family may be five hundred to one thousand plaques each year. [66] They have found a means of income that allows for change and innovation, yet the bulk of their work remains linked to the traditional. The potters of Molela still maintain their hereditary roles as creators of sculptures essential to the continuity of spiritual harmony: They are still artists fashioning earth into sacred gifts for the gods.

On the first day of *Caitra* (March-April), Hindus in Rajasthan and neighbouring Rajput-influenced regions celebrate *Gaṇgaur*, the popular spring festival. For eighteen days they worship the goddess *Gaurī* (sometimes aligned to *Parvatī*) and the god *Gaṇ* (also called *Īśar*, aligned to *Śiva*) in gratitude for a bountiful harvest. As focuses of special *vratas*, women and girls pray to *Gaurī*, the Cosmic Mother, for the health of the men in their families and for marital happiness.[67] In Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan, the ritual begins on the morning of the first day, when the women of each rural

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[66] Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay*, p 37.

[67] Sharma [*Festivals of India*, p 76] states: "During this period, both married and virgin girls worship the goddess. *Gaurī* symbolizes everlasting *saubhagya* (marital bliss). She is also the Eternal Mother of the Universe." According to the Stutleys [p 96], *Gaurī* is the "Name of a goddess, the spouse of *Śiva* and of *Varuṇa*. The oceans (ie., the fertilizing rain) flow down from her (*Nighantu* and *Nirukta* 11.40,41); she is the source of the world, the Cosmic Cow. Agrawala agrees that she symbolizes the waters (*apah*) denoting the undifferentiated form of matter before creation. Payne suggests she was a goddess of the harvest and ripened corn, or perhaps named after the yellow *Gaura* buffalo. The former suggestion is borne out by the festival held on the third clear day of *Caitra* (March-April) when women and girls competed to see who could swing the highest, as the higher they went the higher and better would be the plant growth."

household go into their fields to plant wheat seedlings in a clay pot.[68] Then, in the courtyard of their home, they paint a simple temporary mural that depicts a shrine containing stick images of *Gaṇ* and *Gaurī*. Each morning, they retrace their steps to the fields to sing and pray to the goddess, returning to their courtyard to place a ceremonial dot on the mural. Early on *Gaṇgaur*, the eighteenth day, the women dress in sumptuous finery and gather in the field to make crude mud images of the goddess, which they place in a second clay bowl, often brightly decorated.[69] While there, they pick *kuśa* grass to be given as offerings.[70] Then, in procession, they carry this bowl and the pot filled with

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[68] Documented in the town of Mandawa and surrounding villages. Inglis [Creators and Consecrators, p 190] noted that seeds sprouted in a terracotta pot symbolize the goddess in Tamil Nadu. Referring to *Gangaur*, Jain ["Metalwork" p 129] comments: "Many erstwhile states of Rajasthan were well known for celebrating the *Gaṇgaur* festival. In Udaipur, for instance the boat procession (which formerly carried the images of *Gaurī* and *Gan* in procession to the *Gangaur Ghāṭ*) have been discontinued after the merger of states. In Kishangarh, the deities are still carried in a procession from the fort to the city. Jaipur celebrates *Gangaur* with an elaborate procession of retainers, acrobats, palanquins, camels, elephants. At Mandawa, the festival retains a strong local flavour which seems unchanged over the years." Sharma [Festivals of India, p 76] stated: "The procession of the goddess *Gaurī* is taken out in almost every city and town of Rajasthan. Thousands of men and women dressed in colourful costumes witness the procession. The women with bright brass pitchers on their heads, filled with water, go to the temple of *Gaurī* each morning for ceremonial bath of the goddess and offer flowers. The sight is exhilarating as the entire population of the city assembles for the purpose of rejoicing. At many places in Rajasthan such as Jodhpur, Bikaner, Kota, Udaipur, Alwar and Kishangarh, well-to-do families install wooden idols of *Gaurī* at home for regular worship during the festival."

[69] Wadley [*Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion*, p 158] documented a *vrata pūjā* in Uttar Pradesh called *Tij* (the Third) in which women make small unfired clay images of *Gaurī*, dress them in simple clothes, and worship them for the health and longevity of their brothers.

[70] *Kuśa* grass has been sacred to many Hindu rituals at least since the early *Vedic* period when it was prescribed as an essential part of sacrifices to the gods. According to the Stutleys [p 158], *kuśa* is a "species of grass (*Desmostachya bipinnata*) commonly called *darbha*, regarded by Hindus as the most sacred of Indian grasses. After the removal of the roots, the remainder was spread out on the altar (*vedī*), also on the seat reserved for the gods, and over the whole of the sacrificial area. The stalk is sacrificially pure and the top sacred to the gods (*Śathapatha Brāhmana* VII.3.2,4). Because of its divine nature, the three goddesses, *Saraswatī*, *Ilā* and *Bharatī*, were implored to protect the 'holy grass, the flawless refuge of the gods' (*Ṛg Veda* II.3,8). Later, because of its dangerous supernatural properties, it was burnt at the close of the sacrifice lest harm should befall those who came in contact with it. ...When the *soma* plant became unprocurable, yellow *kuśa* was substituted." Describing some of its attributes, Crooke [p 295] states: "Various grasses possess magical and protective powers. The chief of these is the *Kuśa* or *Dharba* (*Poa cynosyroides*), used in all ceremonies, sanctifying the ground on which it is spread, forming a bed for the dying, a seat for the gods, cleansing all it touches, purifying the impure; it is used to make a finger-ring in holy rites; bride and bridegroom hold a blade of it before their hands are joined, and before it is cut on the last day of *Sawan* (July August) sandalwood paste and flowers are offered to it." (See also ibid. pp 41 & 303.) Gandhi [p 61] comments: "The *Gaṇgaur* feast is

grain sprouts back to their house (Plate 4.43), deposit them in the courtyard before the mural of the god and goddess, and proceed to paint the eighteenth dot. While singing praises to *Gaurī*, the women weave the *kuśa* grass into plaits and place them, along with some of the new wheat shoots, flower petals, and special sweetmeats, in the bowl containing the mud images (Plates 4.44, 4.45, and 4.46). The bowl is then covered with a red cloth and placed upon the head of the senior wife, and all the women parade to the goddess's principal shrine in the community (in Mandawa this is a temporary shrine in a courtyard of the palace). There, accompanied by all the other women of their neighbourhood, they bow and pray before large and impressive wood and brass images of *Gaṇ* and *Gaurī*, offering them more wheat shoots, *Kusa*, sweets, and money in return for their blessing (Plate 4.47). Finally, the women carry the bowl to a nearby water source, often a disused well, and, after circumambulating three times and removing the red cloth, they drop in the bowl (Plate 4.48), the ritual completed.

Women living in the city of Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, purchase terracotta images of *Īśar* and *Gaurī* at their neighbourhood markets. The potter, Kumhar Pal, and his wife, Ronabai, work together in the production of many of these sculptures. Pal throws on his wheel solid clay cylinders to which Ronabai adds pinches and balls of clay to form limbs, facial features, headdresses, decorations, and babies that suckle at *Gaurī*'s breasts (Plates 4.49, 4.50, and 4.51).[71] Each year Pal and Ronabai make several hundred of

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celebrated in March in Rajasthan in honour of the Goddess *Gaurī* (One of the names given to the wife of *Śiva*). The young girls who want to marry ask the goddess to fulfil their wishes. They offer her water in which they have steeped *kusha* grass, an aromatic plant called 'flower of immortality'." See also Courtright p 45.

[71] As she sculpted the two figures, Ronabai said: "My husband only works on the wheel for this festival. He makes the cores of the figures, and I add all the other parts. In this way we work together to make enough figures to supply many customers. ... Yes, the forms are very simple, but this is what our customers like. This is the way in which we learned to make

these pairs of images, which are sold in the local market, as do each of the several potting families in this small city. After purchasing the sculptures, Gwalior's Hindu women fast for the first day of the festival (*Tij*) and again for the third day as part of their nine day (*Nauduurg*) *vratas*. On *Gaṇgaur* day, after prayers, songs, and offerings of fruit, flowers, green grass (symbolizing a fertile harvest), and pots of water to their images of *Īśar* and *Gaurī*, they place the sculptures on their heads and parade them proudly through the city before finally depositing them in the local tank (reservoir).[72]

The *Bolīkī* festival in northern Madhya Pradesh, coinciding with *Makara Saṅkrānti*, a pan-Indian holiday celebrated in mid-January[73], marks

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these figures from our mothers and fathers. It has always been so. ... Most we bake in the oven, but others we leave unbaked. ... We also make elephants for use in *Divālī* Festival. They are also not baked and are made by both of us, with Palji making the body on the wheel and me adding the rest." Ronabai also recited the *kathi* (legend) which is told during the *Gaṇgaur vrata*, in which *Parvati* is fasting and longs for food. *Śiva* suggests that she goes to the jungle to distract herself, but while there she gets so hungry she eats some mud. Upon her return, *Śiva* knows that she has eaten something and asks her to tell him what it is. *Parvati* is ashamed and lies, saying that she has eaten milk and rice and wonderful fruits. *Śiva* demands to see inside her stomach, and Parvati panics that he will see the mud and discover her lie, so she prays to *Gaṇgaur* to change the mud inside her stomach into milk, rice, and fruits. When *Śiva* magically looks inside her stomach, the miracle has happened and her falsehood is undetected. Ronabai said that this *katha* proves to people that if their hearts are pure, their faith sincere, and the *vrata* performed correctly, then the mud of their images will be turned into divine substance during the *pūjā*.

[72]A related harvest festival in Maharashtra is described by Pupul Jayakar [p 237] in which "*Gaurī* is conceived as a bundle of wild flowering plants. Nine plants are gathered by women to form the body of the goddess. Her vegetal form is then clothed in auspicious garments, a brass mask of *Gaurī* ornamented with a nose-ring and necklace placed on the image and the form of the goddess installed on a stool before the doorway of the house. This is the body of the goddess *Gaurī*, incarnate. Underneath the stool an auspicious square diagram, the *Pitha* or altar of the goddess is drawn. A virgin girl is made to stand on the diagram and worshipped along with the plants. As the girl accompanied by the plants enters the house, the mark of *Gaurī*'s foot is drawn in red and the girl is asked, '*Gaurī*, *Gaurī* whither have you come' '*Gaurī*, Gaurī, what do you see?' The girl and the plants are taken from room to room of the house, special attention being given to the central room where the bride and babies are born. The plant goddess as *Gaurī* is worshipped for three days and is then carried by an old woman to the river where the vegetal image is immersed in the waters."

[73] *Makārā Saṅkranti* is held on the winter solstice full moon, an auspicious date throughout India. Some of the other festivals held on that day are *Pongal* in the Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, *Jellikathu* in Madurai, Tiruchirapalli, and Tanjore, and *Ganga-Sagara* in Bengal. A time of renewal and regeneration, *Makārā Saṅkranti* and *Pongal* are times when all pottery is replaced and tools are worshipped (particularly in the south). Raghavan [p 182] comments: "It is interesting and revealing to note that in the lower Himalayas, during *Makārā Saṅkranti*, little images of birds are made in flour and baked in butter and are hung round the necks of children as amulets of good fortune. The next day they are taken down and thrown to crows and other birds to take away all evil. The *Makārā Saṅkranti* has been held as a very sacred day for the gratification of the ancestors, *Pitrs*, by

the engagement of *Śiva* and *Pārvatī*, and people come from all directions to join in the celebration. The *Hatere Kumhars* in Chhatarpur District sculpt simple solid dowels of clay into horses, which they barter in exchange for half a kilo of rice each (Plate 4.52).[74] On the day before the festival, large *melās* are held in each of the important towns of the district (Chhatarpur, Rajnagar, Khajuraho, Nowgong, etc) in which many potters congregate from nearby villages to sell their own sculptures(Plate 4.53). The price is generally fifty paise (1.15 pence or 2.75 cents) for a small horse and two rupees (6.7 pence or 11 cents) for a large one.[75] In the village of Dhamna, it takes the potter Mani Ram only about forty minutes to sculpt each *Bolīkī* horse, by connecting four thin rope legs to a long flat body, arching up a dowel neck with a raised mane, attaching to this the horse's head, ears, eyes, and bridal, building a saddle of two ridges of clay, and then placing between the ridges a stick-figure rider (representing *Śiva*) (Plate 4.54). The 200 mm (eight inch) high solid finished product, when fired, although simplistic, has the arched legs and neck and a rider remarkably similar in design to Greek terracottas of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. These horses, along with simple terracotta of *Pārvatī* and tiny clay replicas of *charkas* (hand-turned flour mills) are all painted white after firing, some with simple designs in black, yellow, and blue. They are bartered or sold to *Bolīkī* devotees and taken home. On the next day, called *Bhar Bhārata*, each family performs a *vrata* to *Śiva* in return for his blessings on all the male children. In *pūjā* all three sculptures are blessed, *Śiva* invoked for his strength and power, *Lakṣmī* for health and longevity, and the *charka*

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baths, offerings of water-libations (*Tarpana*) and performance of *Sraddha*." *Makāra Saṅkrānti* in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh is described in Archana pp 40-44.

[74] Potters who sculpt terracottas for Boliki were documented in the villages of Karohi, Surajpura, Singhpur Charanpattika, Dhamna, and Khera in Chhatarpur District.

[75] As of 1987.

for abundance and fertility. After this *pūjā*, the *Lakṣmī* image and the *charka* are given to the family's children as toys. Into a wooden box the devotees place the horse, one packet of homemade sweet and salty food for each son, and a *Sanskrit* prayer written by the *Brāhman* priest who serves the family. This box, kept on the family altar for two weeks, is the focus of daily prayer to *Śiva*. At the end of this period, on the festival of *Vasanta Pañcami* (associated elsewhere with the goddess *Saraswatī*[76]), the box is opened and each son eats his blessed food in order to ensure his health and success in the coming year. Then, in procession, the votive terracotta horse is taken to the village pond, immersed in the water (*bisurga*), and left.[77] In this final act, the terracotta begins to dissolve; at the same time, the energies of all the prayers, hopes, and rituals return to the earth, symbolically completing the divine cycle of creation and destruction.[78]

Satī, the practice of self-immolation of a widow upon her husband's funeral pyre, has been forbidden by law in India throughout this century. *Satī*'s notoriety in Western countries as the epitome of Indian disregard for and suppression of women ignores the fact that a woman who practised this ritual was believed to escape the endless ordeal of reincarnation to merge instantly with the godhead — to become the goddess *Satī* herself.[79] Shrines to *Satī* are found throughout India.[80] One woman who became *Satī* is regularly honoured

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[76] *Saraswatīpūjā* on *Vasanta Pañcami* in Bengal is celebrated with worship directed towards large unfired clay images of the goddess which are then paraded through the streets and ultimately immersed in a river or tank.

[77] Although rarely practiced today, historically bronze *Bolīkī* horses were given by some devotees to *Śiva* and similarly deposited in the village tanks. Scores of corroded bronze horse sculptures have been uncovered in the infrequent dredging and cleaning of local temple tanks.

[78] *Boliki* festival, and the performance of the *vratas* and *pūjās* associated with it, was observed in Chhatarpur town, Khajuraho, and Singhpur Charanpattika.

[79] Stutley pp 272-273, Maloney pp 292

[80] According to Crooke [p 155]: "At many places in Northern India, particularly on the banks of rivers or tanks, little masonry shrines dedicated to a *Sati* may be seen, and they often take the place of, or include, those in honour of the *Pitri* or sainted dead. The shrine is often

in one such shrine in Azamgarh eastern Uttar Pradesh represented by a simple unornamented stucco-covered brick pillar. Upon this pillar women annually place gifts of terracotta pot-shaped trees upon which bird figures symbolize the freeing of *Satī*'s spirit from the bondage of rebirth (Plates 4.55 & 4.56).[81] The female devotees who donate these sculptures believe that in honouring her spirit, their own souls are made more pure.[82]

Many of the images used in religious festivals in the Gangetic Plain, from central Uttar Pradesh to West Bengal, and in Orissa are sculpted in clay on a fretwork of sticks and straw, and remain unfired.[83] The sculptors descend from a lineage of specialists in these figures, and although they are from the *Kumbhara* caste, they rarely make vessels or tiles. They are trained from infancy in the exact science of figural production: The precise proportions of each aspect of a figure are prescribed through tradition. To deviate from these prescriptions and innovate would be sacrilegious – an insult to the god or goddess depicted in the sculpture.[84] In Kumartuli, a potters' section of

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decorated with a rude carving in stone representing the husband and his faithful wife, one of her arms resting affectionately on his neck, or if he died in battle she stands beside him and his charger. ...Women come here and pray for boy babies or for the health of husbands and children, and when they thank the *Sati* for the favours they place on her shrine some cornstalks in the form of the lucky *Swastika*."

[81] Other than the sculpted *dīpa* pot described in footnote 26, this is the only shrine known to exist in India in which terracotta sculptures have been given to *Satī*.

[82] Responding to the educated disavowal of the practice of *Satī*, and compounded by the fact that *Satī* was outlawed by the British, the local villagers in Mirjamalpur were understandably reluctant to divulge to a foreigner any information about the rituals concerning this shrine. The data given herein is less detailed than that concerning other votive terracottas, but it was included nonetheless because of the rarity of its nature.

[83] Although the production of these ephemeral works of art is widespread, created for the seasonal worship of many millions of Hindus, surprisingly little academic attention has ever been given to them, with the exception of some documentation of the *Durgā* and *Kālī* figures sculpted in Calcutta. Other than these Bengali accounts, the only published research is a portion of James Preston's article on Orissa: "Creation of the Sacred Image: Apotheosis and Destruction in Hinduism", pp 22-25. Previously undocumented and still unpublished research by Stephen Inglis ["Creators and Consecrators", pp 257-60], has recorded similar unfired mud figures of goddesses sculpted by potters in Tamil Nadu.

[84] The laws governing these prescriptions have been handed down through oral traditions within each *Kumbhāra* family from father to son for centuries. Ancient texts which cite these laws are the fifth century *Kāśyapa Jñānakāṇḍāḥ*, the eighth century *Vimanacarnakalpa*, the sixteenth century *Śilparatna*, and the sixteenth to seventeenth century *Samurtarcanadhika*. Most accessible of all of these texts is the *Kāśyapa Jñānakāṇḍāḥ*

Calcutta, hundreds of large and elaborate images of the goddess *Durgā* are sculpted each year.[85] Most are made on commission for her devotees, who build temporary shrines in her honour during the *Dussehra* festival in the month of *Aśvina* (September-October). This autumn festival is only the beginning of eight months of other special *pūjās*, each of which requires its own unfired images sculpted by Kumartuli's potters, creating for these craftsmen a steady respectable income far above that of other potters (Plate 4.57).[86] For the *Dussehra* festival in Uttar Pradesh, gigantic tableaux are constructed depicting scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* and containing dozens of larger-than-life clay figures of the gods (Plates 4.58, 4.59 & 4.60). Although still conforming to the rigid proportions required by ancient traditions, many modern sculptures portray the stylistic influences of contemporary films, advertising, posters, and popular art. The hair styles, cosmetics, and clothing of many images directly reflect the popular idolization of film stars and models.[87]

(*Kāśyapa's* Book of Wisdom) translated by Goudriaan, pp 141-161. The most detailed analysis of these prescriptions may be found in Varma's *The Indian Technique of Clay Modelling*, pp 7-108 and 192-221.

[85] The ancestors of the sculpting potters of Kumartuli were brought in the mid-eighteenth century from Dacca by Maharaja Krisnacandra of Nadia and settled in Ghurni, near Krisnanagar, in order to provide the members of his kingdom with images of *Kālī* and *Jagatdhari* for *pūjā*. Over the next century, the popularity of these images spread to incorporate the production of similar unfired images of *Durgā*, *Saraswatī*, *Kārtika*, and others, and a permanent community of potters moved to Calcutta, establishing Kumartuli in order to meet the demand for these images from the burgeoning urban population. "Along with the celebration of the *pūjās* (worship) with clay images, Krishnachandra also introduced the tradition of *bisharjan* (immersion) of the image after each *pūjā* so that a new image is required for worship each year. The *barwari* (community) *pūjā* was also introduced most probably in the district of Nadia around the beginning of the nineteenth century. It caught on and is now an all Bengal phenomenon [Prabhas Sen p 55]." Varma *The Indian Technique of Clay Modelling*, Plates XVI-XXII, illustrates the entire process of sculpting images in Kumartuli. For more information see Bean pp 30-32 and R.P. Gupta pp 104-105.

[86] A consequent intense rivalry exists between the sculpting *Kumbhāras* and those that primarily throw pottery. This competition is only heightened by the ethnic differences between these East Bengalis and the other West Bengalis.

[87] Referring to the unfired clay images of Orissa, Preston [p 23] states: "The style of images among some artists remains relatively unchanged and true to the *śāstras*. Others, especially the more successful image makers, introduce numerous innovations. Such changes are requested by patrons. Especially popular are images of *Śiva* and *Saraswatī* as portrayed in

For the annual *Chattha* festival in Bihar (described through a focus on personal *vratas* in Chapter Three), potter sculptors are commissioned to sculpt entire sets of large figures portraying the sun god *Sūrya*, his horse-drawn chariot, and numerous attendants. Mahesh Pandit and his son, Rambabu, are two such sculptors living and working in the city of Patna. Assisted by three male family members, they take ten days to construct all the necessary figures (Plates 4.61 through 4.68). They begin each one by building a base figure of straw wrapped with cane strips upon an armature of bamboo. Next they mix clay with rice husks and apply it to the surface of the straw to form a rough impression of the desired sculpture. After the clay dries in the sun for a day, the two principal artists add a second coat of finer clay. On the images of humans and gods, refined sculptural detail is limited to faces and hands, as the rest of the sculptures will not be visible. After again drying for a day, the sculptures are painted with three coats of slip to give them a smooth finish.[88] Next, all the exposed portions are painted with an undercoat of *cunam* (white lime), followed by a finish coat of commercial paints to ensure that all 'skin' has a 'healthy' pink tone. Finally, the completed sculptures are dressed in elaborate cloth costumes, decorated with jewellery (Plate 4.69), and installed in a temporary roadside shrine (Plates 4.70 and 4.71). An entire set of thirteen of these imposing figures cost the

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Hindi films. Typical changes include modern hairstyles, tight fitting *sārīs*, and rich pastel colors currently in vogue. Some artists refuse to meet these demands, claiming such 'modern' departures from traditional forms do *not* inspire genuine religious devotion. Those artists who do tolerate innovations get their ideas from numerous sources, including the India-wide poster tradition depicting gods and goddesses of all kinds in scenes from the epics and *puranas*."

[88] As he modelled the finishing touches on *Sūrya*'s face (Plate 4.63), the potter Rambabu Pandit said: "My father taught me this art, and his father before him. It has come down in our family for many generations. That is why we are called Pandit, because of our skill. ...This is the most important moment of my work, when I give the god his expression. It should be one of power, of goodness, and of extreme beauty. He is the sun who gives us all life. This work I do should make him live for the community. It is an honour to do this work. I hope they will be pleased."

community that commissioned it 4,000 rupees (₹130 or $215). Installed in a public place as an obvious statement of the neighbourhood's devotion, it is a focus for prayer and ritual for five days.[89] A *Brāhman purohit* conducts constant *pūjās* from pre-dawn until midnight, assisted by seven postulant priests and four musicians, with large speakers on all four top corners of the shrine loudly broadcasting *bhajans* and *ślokas* to the entire community. Community members and passersby on the street, regularly file into the shrine to give offerings of fruit, flowers, and money to *Sūrya*, many staying to sit in prayer and listen to the priests' invocations. On the final day of the festival, the entire community joins the priests as they carry the figures in procession to the nearby banks of the Ganges River. There, with the triumphant sounds of conches, drums, and shouts of praise to *Sūrya*, the sculptures are placed deep within the current, and all the sculpted features of the god, his attendants, and the chariot horses rapidly dissolve (*bisurga*), leaving only the straw-wrapped sticks as skeletal reminders of these communal gifts of earth (Plate 4.72).[90]

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[89] Again referring to the festival images of Orissa, Preston's comments (pp 24-25] are equally applicable to the figures documented in Patna: "Merchants act as patrons, in part, to advertise their business enterprises as the images are carried through the streets of the city. ...Government officials who occupy prestigious positions are often enthusiastic contributors to the creation of popular sacred icons. ...Thus, the bureaucratic elites often extend their prestige and influence by engaging in a tradition which is deeply embedded in the old *dharma/rājā* configuration; they donate large sums to temples, assist in the construction of new neighbourhood shrines, and display their devotion by patronizing the creation of popular street icons during important festivals. Since a *pūjā pandal* (sculptural tableau) involves several images costing between 2,000 to 3,000 rupees, the investment of merchants and high government officials can be considerable. Students, lower level bureaucrats, and neighbourhood associations, on the other hand, share resources, involving more modest investment on the part of individuals. ...Such corporate patronage often cuts across caste, occupation, and interest groupings, since members of increasingly heterogeneous neighbourhoods come together, take up a collection, share food, and identify themselves as a single unit through the sacred image. One aspect ...is the friendly competition that arises between neighbourhoods which strive to create the best image... The same neighbourhoods rush to be the first in the destruction of the images during the *bisurgan*, or immersion phase of the festival."

[90] Rambabu Pandit commented: "Yes, I am sorry to see that work go under (the water). I think this image (of *Sūrya*) is indeed one of my best. But also it is a great glory to give these gifts to *Gaṅgā*, with it our lives are blessed for another year. Also, without *bisurga*, where would our work be next year? This constant process of making and making again is the

gods' gift to us. It gives us our profession, our livelihood, food for our families. So with the loss of one image comes the promise of another."

Plate 4.1) A row of hand-thrown terracotta horses constructed as part of a production line are being painted with clay slips prior to firing in Panchmura, Bankura District, West Bengal. In order to prevent breakage when being transported, the horses' ears are fired separately and added later.

Plate 4.2) As a part of large-scale production, the potters of Panchmura, Bankura District, West Bengal, concurrently throw on their wheels all of the elements used to construct many of their popular horse sculptures.

Plate 4.3) A brick platform marked with a *triśūla* is lined with images of elephants and horses given to the Mother Goddess, *Mātājī*, in Onda, Bankura District, West Bengal.

Plate 4.4) Elephants and horses of many sizes and types mark gifts to *Caṇḍi* at this shrine in Murakhata, Bankura District, West Bengal. Bowing in *pūjā* to *Caṇḍi* , a devotee places flowers and lights a *dīpa* before an elephant she had given earlier to remind the goddess of the *vrata* she had made.

Plate 4.5) At a roadside shrine to *Manasā* in Vishnupur, Bankura District, West Bengal, small elephants and horses stand in front of a *kalaśa* and several *Manasā ghats*. The latter depict the face of the goddess and *nāga* hoods.

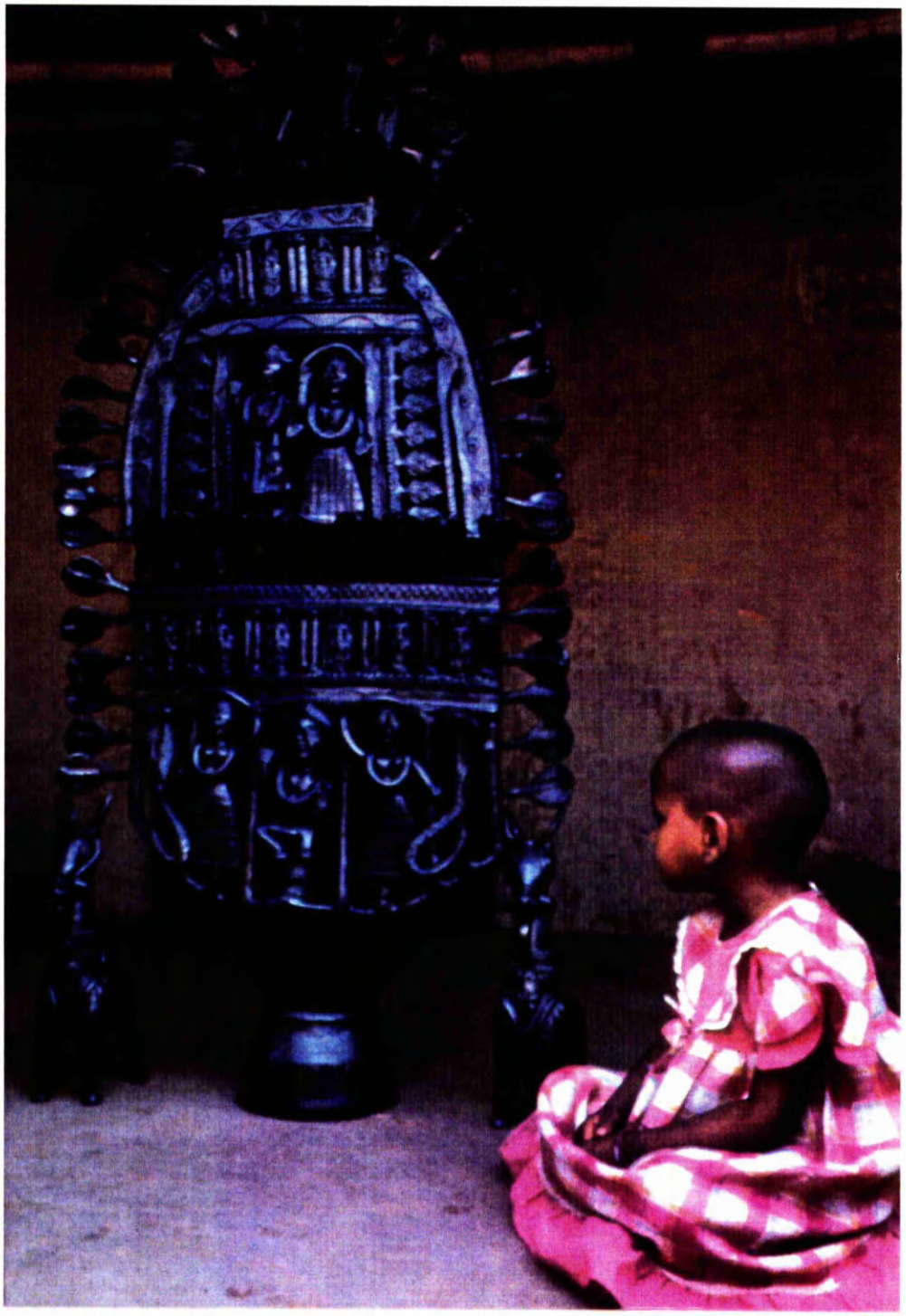

Plate 4.6) This tall reduction-fired *jhad*, representing the mythology of *Manasā*, has been commissioned by an entire community to be placed as a central image in her shrine (Panchmura, Bankura District, West Bengal).

Plate 4.7) A *Santal* tribesman kneels before a sacred tree in prayer to his god *Jahār Bonga*. Once a year, terracotta horses are given to the god, accompanied by sacrifices of chickens and a goat (Asta Sol, Bankura District, West Bengal).

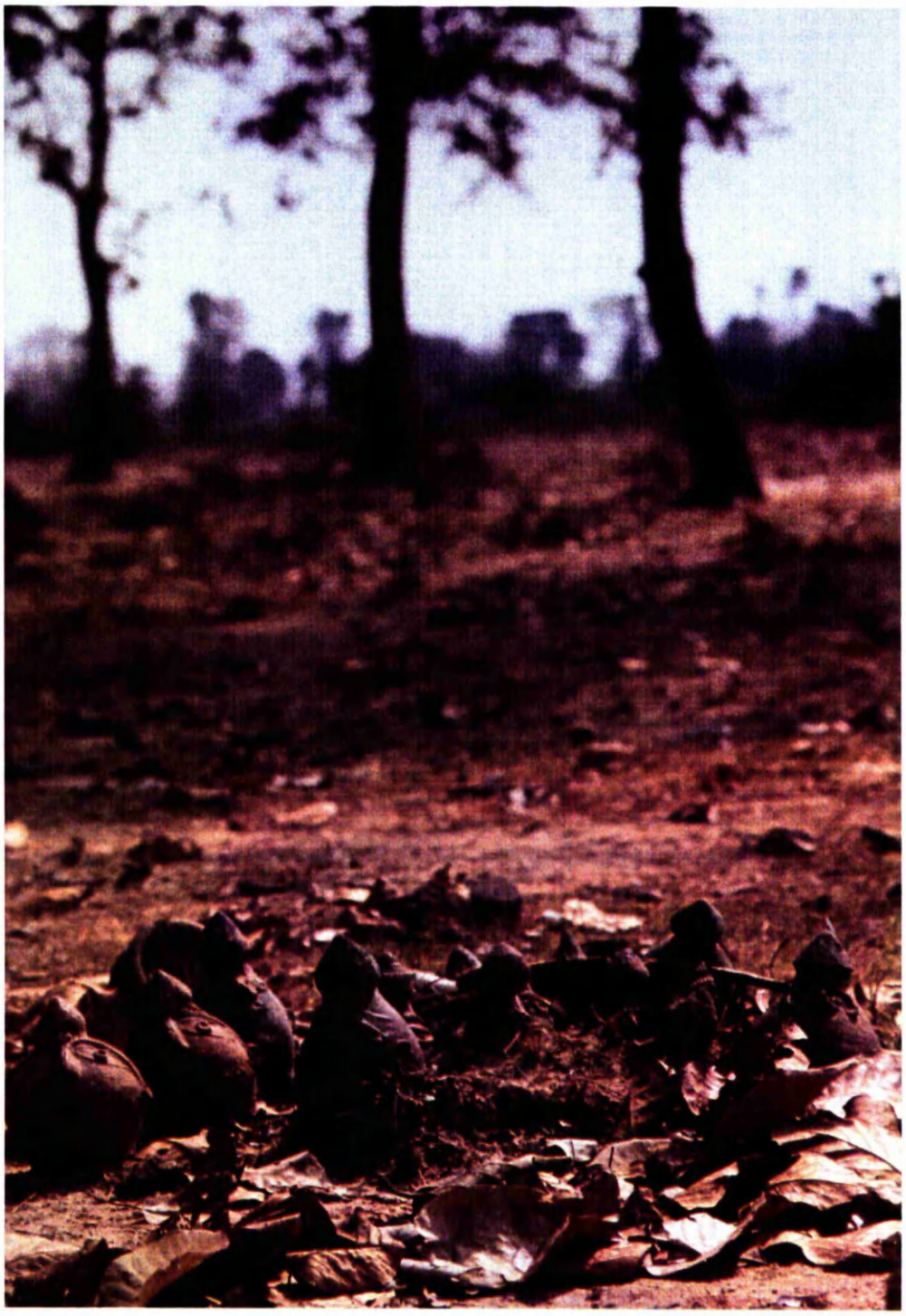

Plate 4.8) Simple faces sculpted on the rim of up-turned terracotta pots represent the *Santal* goddess *Barā* at her shrine in Asta Sol, Bankura District, West Bengal.

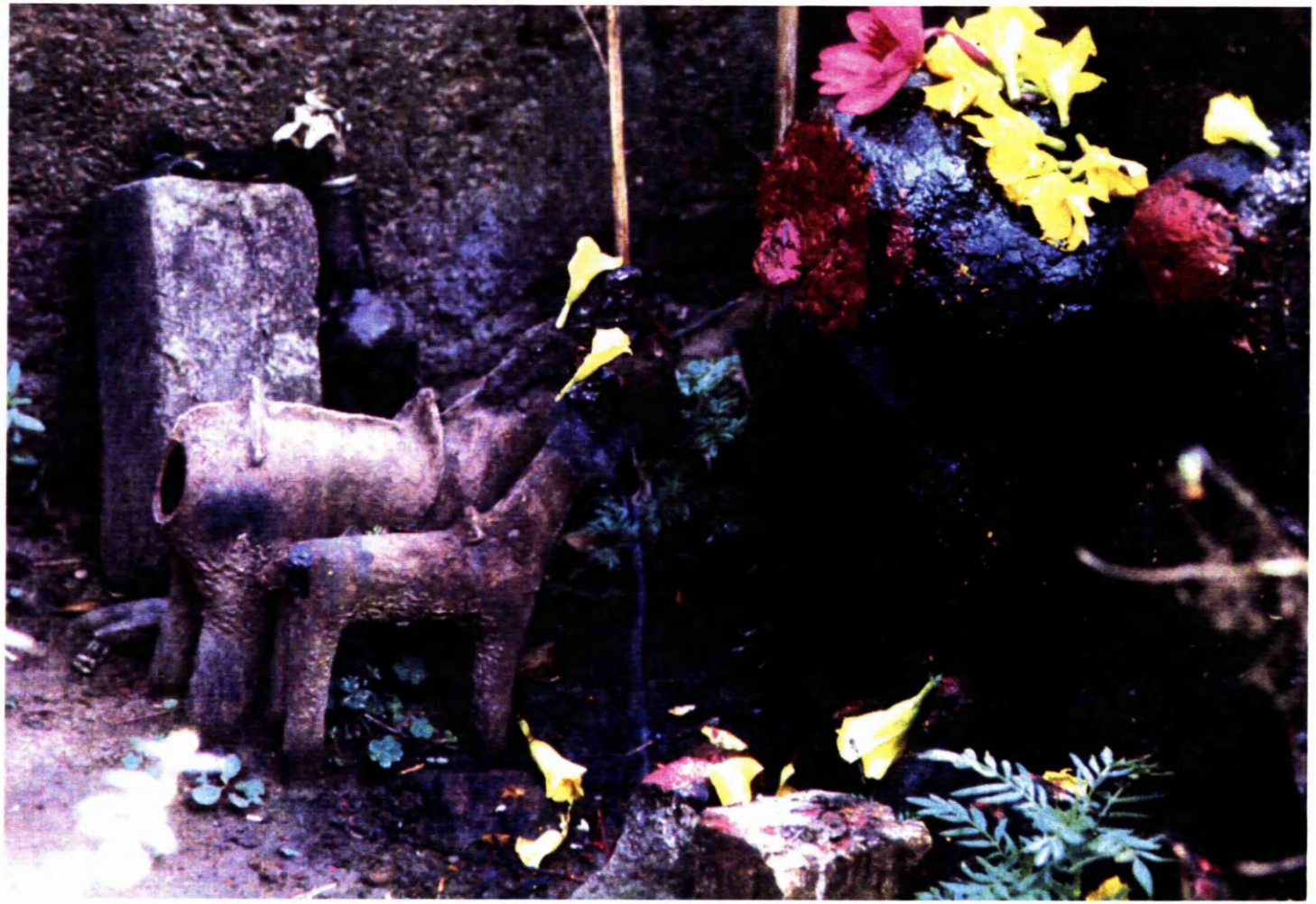

Plate 4.9) Terracotta horses have been placed before a blackened stone which is viewed as the goddess *Bhuniyā*, the *Thākurāṇī* of Khonant, southern Puri District, Orissa.

Plate 4.10) A young potter in Salganj, Puri District, Orissa, has just finished firing these terracotta horses and awaits their delivery to the devotees who commissioned them. After paying the potter with rupees, grain, and cloth, the devotees place the images in the local shrine of *Mātājī*, the Mother Goddess.

Plate 4.11) These archaic-type dowel horses have been given to *Pāndābasunī* in Balikondalo, Puri District, Orissa.

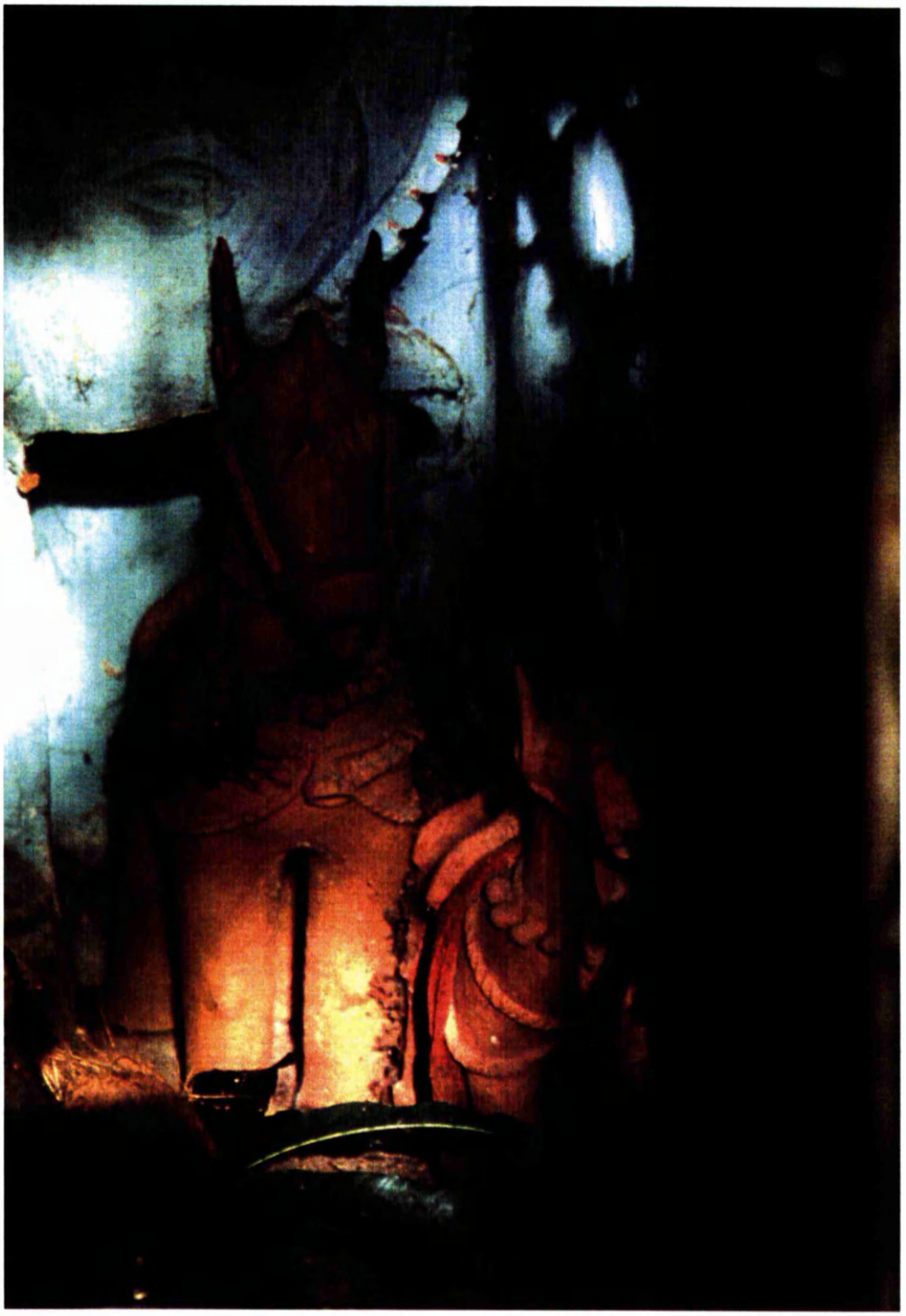

Plate 4.12) Terracotta horses, given as a part of *vratas* to the goddess *Maṅgalā Thākurāṇī*, have been placed to the side of her large amorphous stone image inside a shrine in Athagarh, Cuttack District, Orissa.

Plate 4.13) Large wheel-thrown horses stand next to a sacred pipal tree dedicated to the goddess *Bārabhuiyan* at Kimbiriguda, southern Puri District, Orissa.

Plate 4.14) Two sacred trees, a pipal and a palm, which have been 'married' (grafted together) as a symbol of fertility in Ganjam District, Orissa. Votive offerings have been tied to the trunk of the palm tree.

Plate 4.15) Votive pots and sculptures have been tied to the trunk of a palm tree as gifts to the god *Bommula* in gratitude for his blessings in Gañjam District, Orissa.

Plate 4.16) An upturned pot painted with a face, placed on a pole, and given a cloth body, averts the evil eye from house construction on a house in Chenur, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

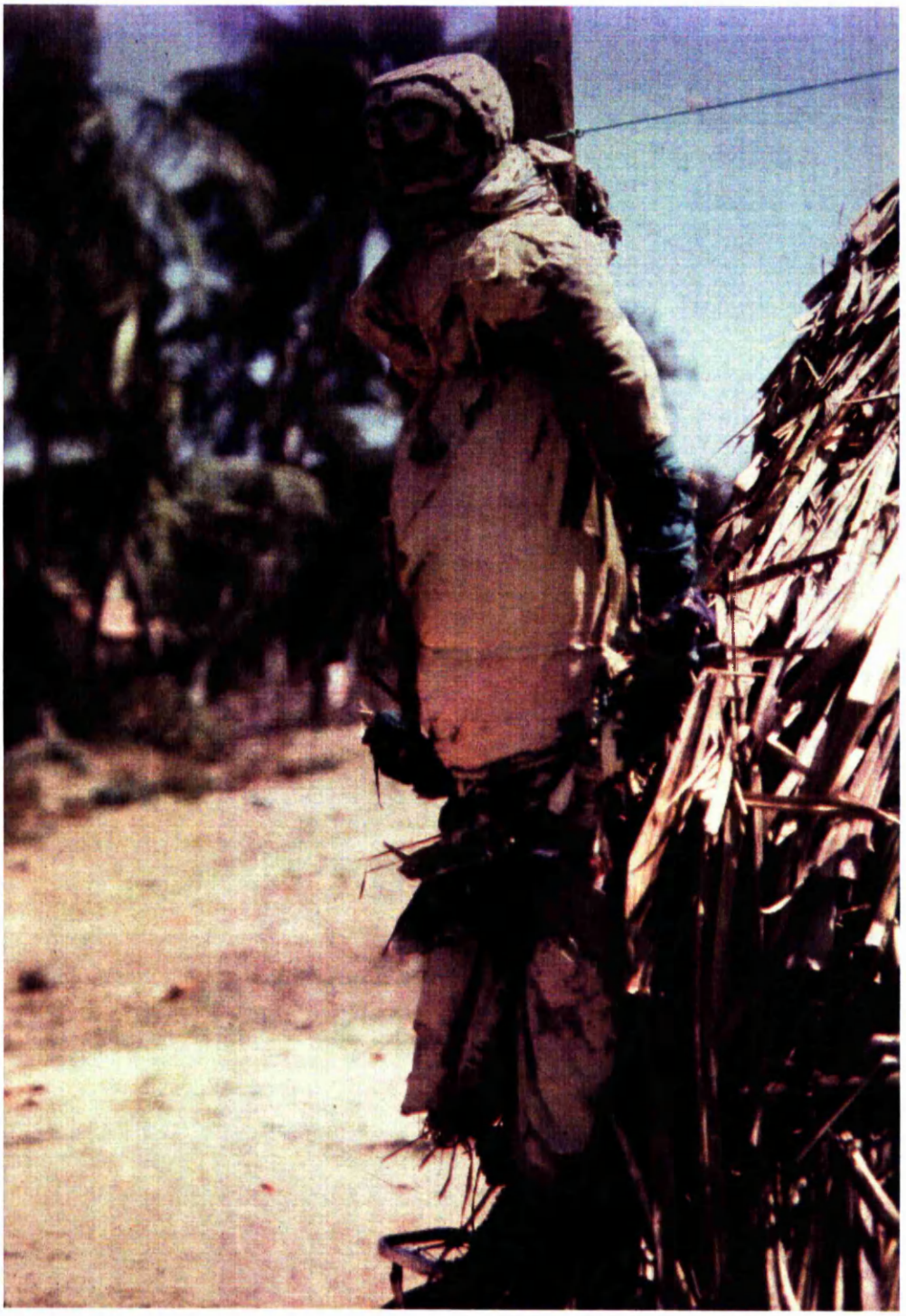

Plate 4.17) A pot-headed scarecrow with an enormous black phallus frightens evil spirits away from a house in Vandipalliam, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

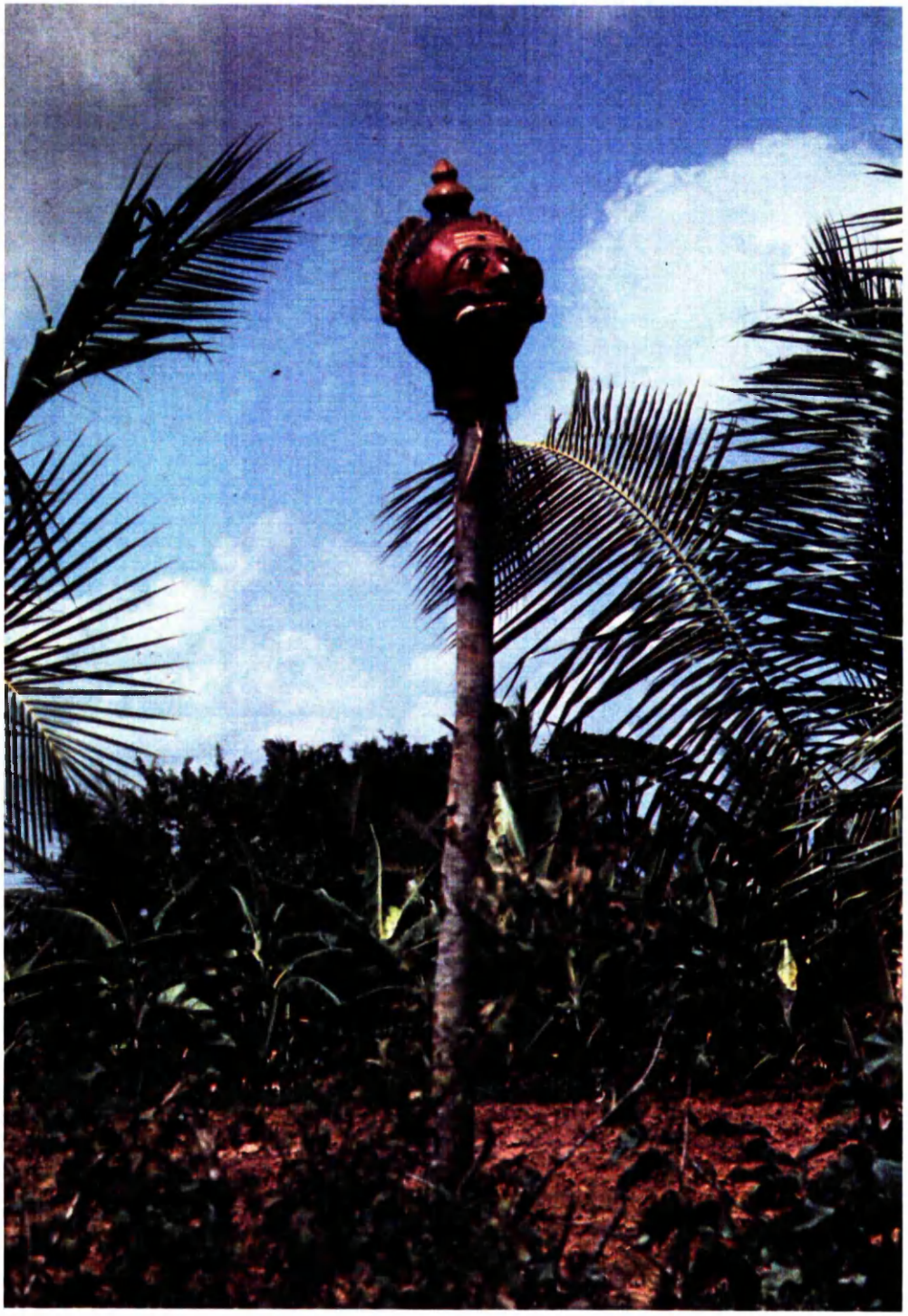

Plate 4.18) Tamil potters sculpt pots to resemble fierce faces, which are erected on poles in fields to frighten away not only birds and animals but any sort of evil (Vandīpalliam, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

Plate 4.19) Brightly painted new terracotta images representing devotees of *Kālī* are given every year to her shrine near Pulikurchi in Trivandrum District, Kerala.

Plate 4.20) Votive terracotta images of *Kālī* devotees (Pullikurchi, Trivandrum District, Kerala).

Plate 4.21) Pot figures and heads collected and placed in a shrine to *Vanadurga* on the edge of tilled fields in Kumbharakottige, North Kanara District, Karnataka.

Plate 4.22) The mouth of this pot figure holds a small clay *dīpa* which is lighted during *pūjās* to *Mastī* (*Satī*) in her shrine in Hegde, North Kanara District, Karnataka.

Plate 4.23) Simple pot figures and slab faces at a *Vanadurgā* shrine in Kumbharakottige, North Kanara District, Karnataka.

Plate 4.24) An open-mouthed, wide-faced pot figure excavated from a neglected shrine deep in the jungle near Mallavali, North Kanara District, Karnataka.

Plate 4.25) A collection of terracotta heads, many of them finely sculpted, lie on the floor of the jungle in an unmarked shrine to *Vanadurgā* near Kudigundi, North Kanara District, Karnataka.

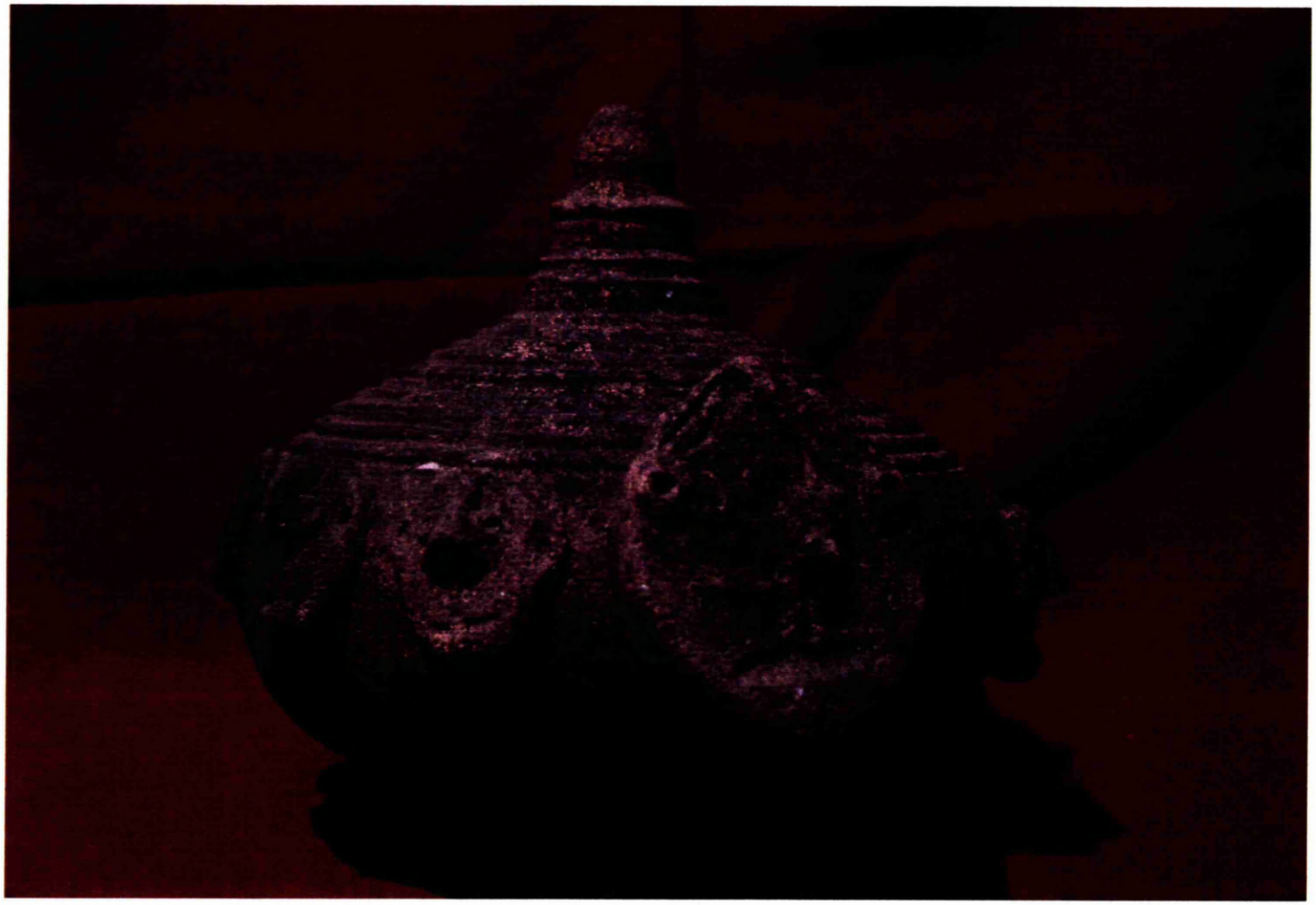

Plate 4.26) A small, six-headed pot figure excavated at the shrine of *Devimanegadde* at Haligadde, North Kanara District, Karnataka, where the principle image is a large pot figure with similar attributes.

Plate 4.27) Potter Vitoba K. Guniga rolls clay to make a bridle for a horse in Kharwar, North Kanara District, Karnataka.

Plate 4.28) Shrine to the goddess *Bandī* at Bandissiti village near Kharwar, North Kanara District, Karnataka.

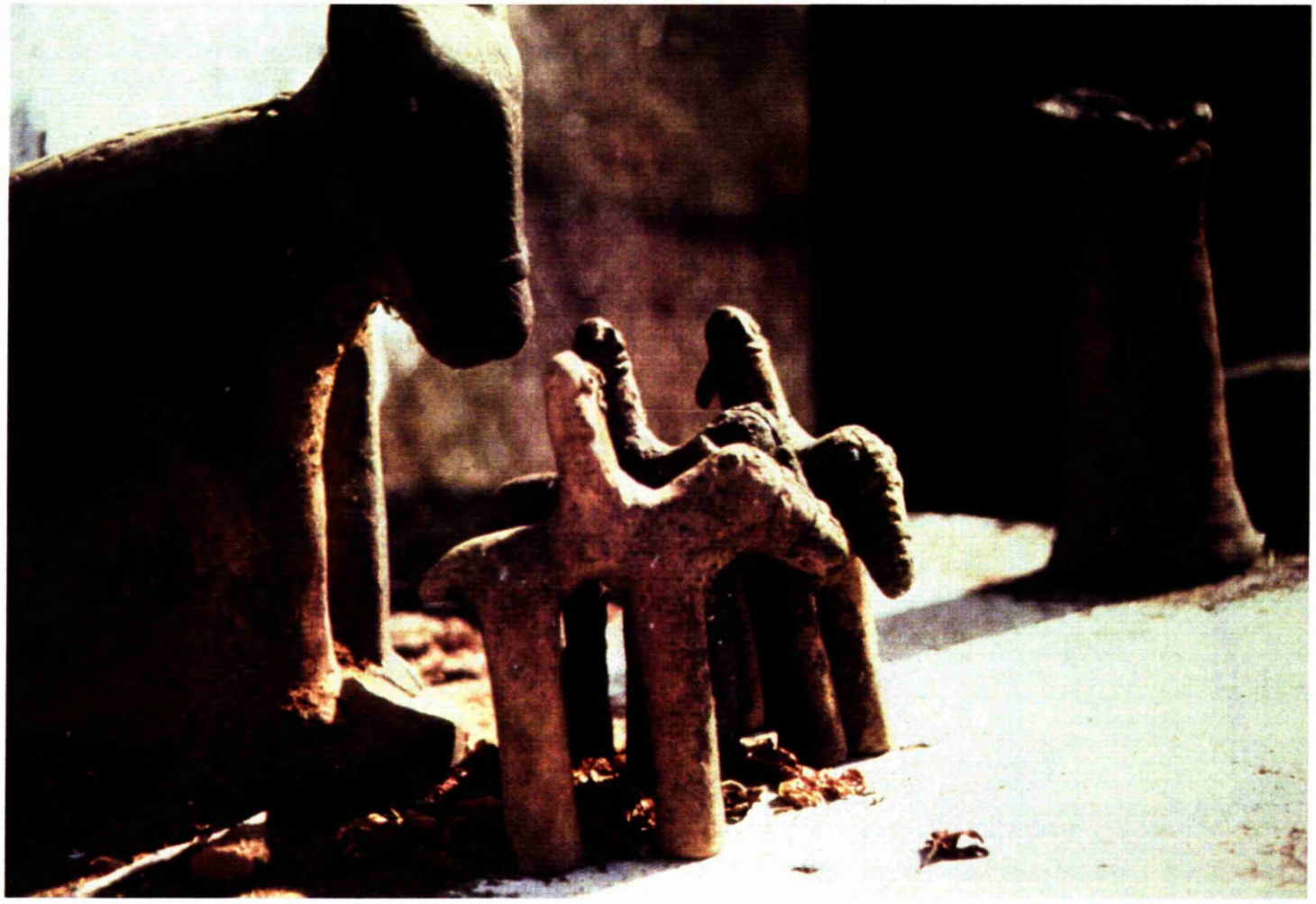

Plate 4.29) Standing beside an ancient stone votive image, only two of the many hundreds of terracotta horses given the previous year to the goddess *Bandi* during the *Bandi Habba* festival in Bandissiti, North Kanara District, Karnataka, remain unbroken just before her festival.

Plate 4.30) In a technique similar to that used in India for thousands of years, a potter in Paithan, Maharashtra, presses clay into a four-piece mould to make an image of *Brahmā* identical to the one beside him.

Plate 4.31) A vendor at a festival market in Paithan sells metallic-painted, moulded terracottas in a variety of styles depicting popular images of gods and political heroes (Aurangabad District, Maharashtra).

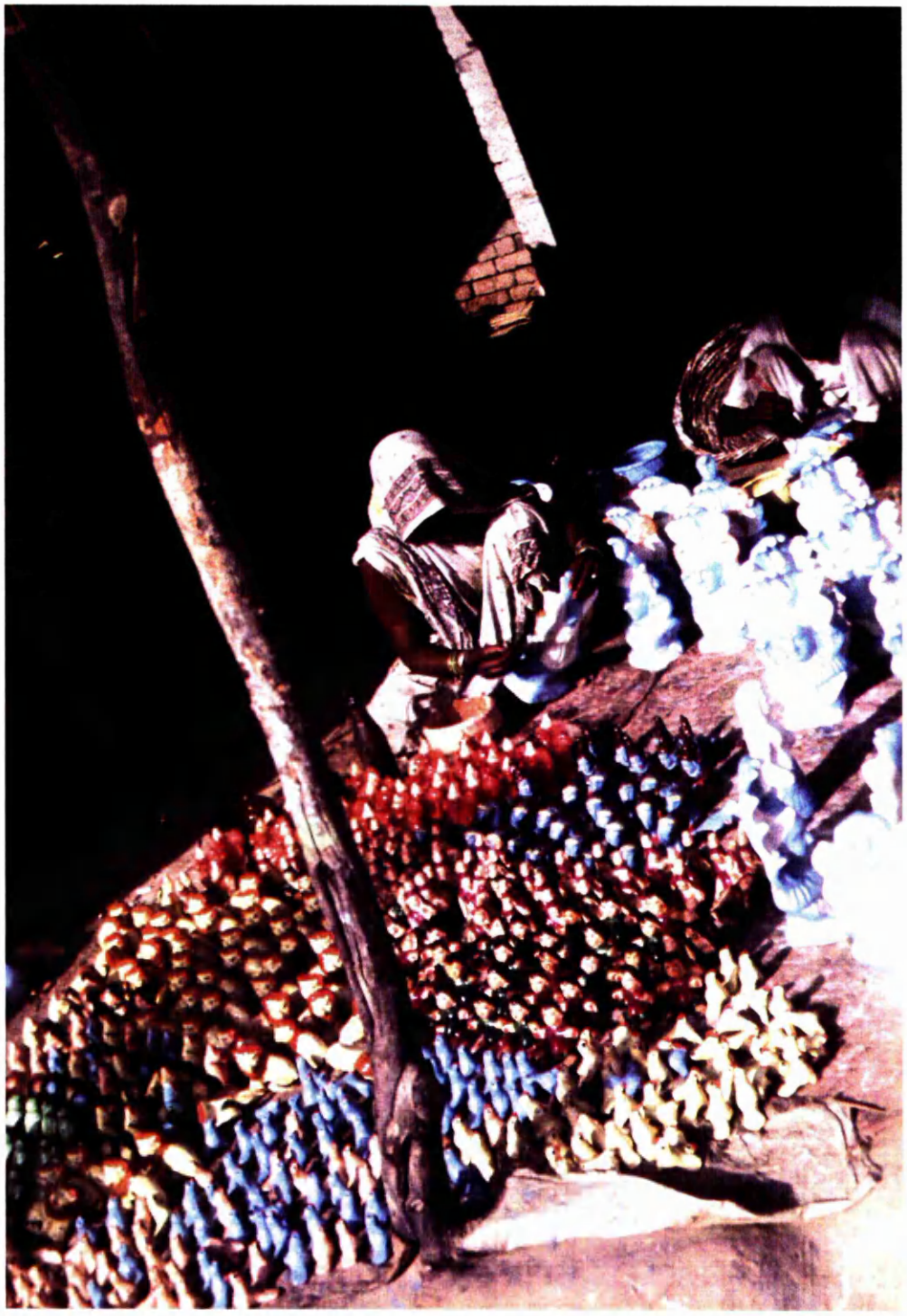

Plate 4.32) Busts of a *nāga*-crowned *Śiva* are painted with a sequence of bright colours before being shipped to urban markets along with a selection of *Divālī* toys (Poonda Negala, Aligarh District, Uttar Pradesh).

Plate 4.33) A potter in Kamalapura, Bellary District, Karnataka, sculpts an image of *Gaṅeśa* to be used in *Gaṅeśapūjā*.

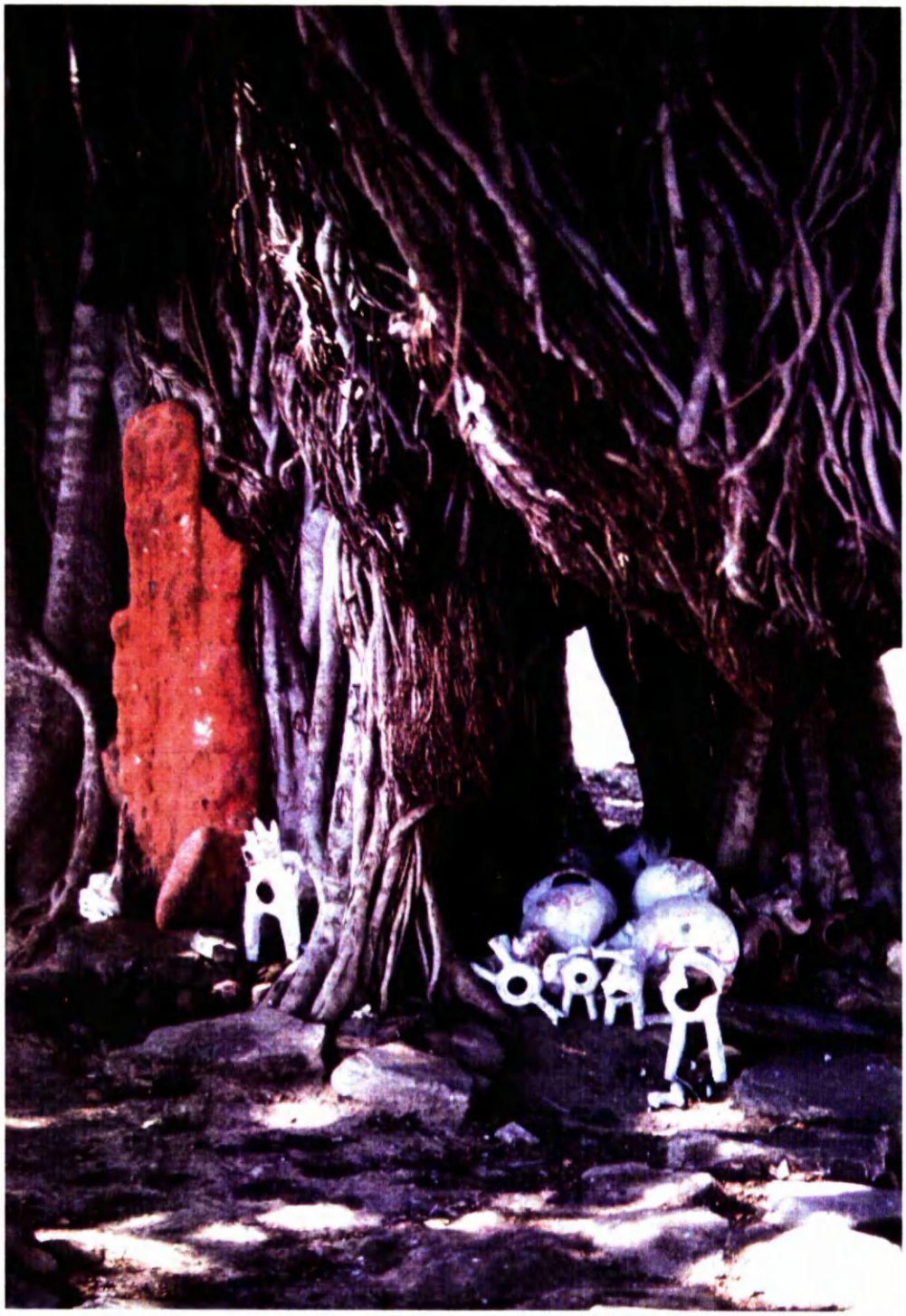

Plate 4.34) Abstract sculptures of horses have been given to the tribal god, *Bhilalabābā*, whose presence is worshipped in this large vermilion-covered stone entwined in the roots of a banyan tree in western Madhya Pradesh. The figures come from *Bhilala* devotees who believe that their god granted them their requests for aid and cures (Ambua, Dhar District).

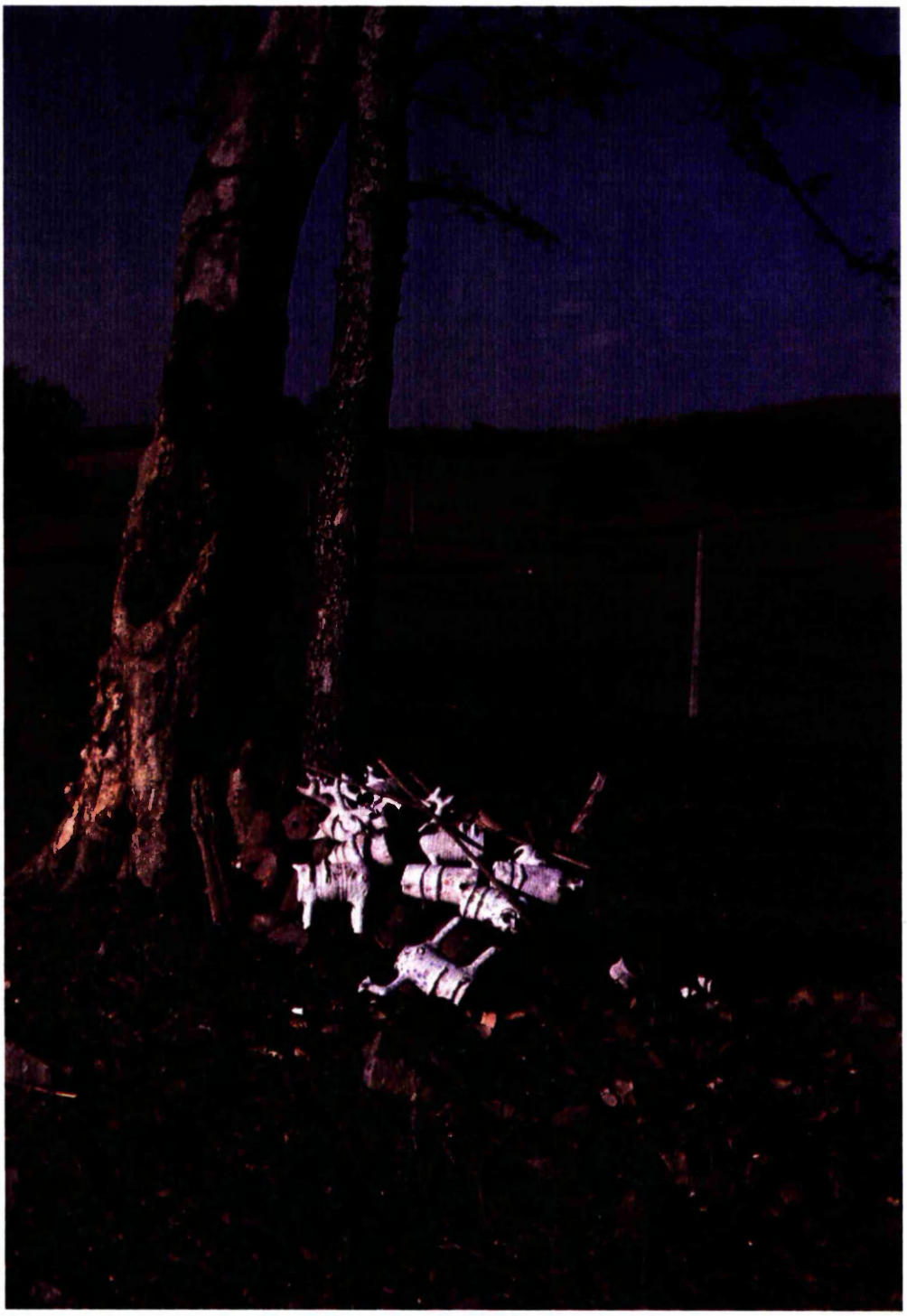

Plate 4.35) On the edge of fields far outside the village of Badaguda, Jhabua District, *Bhilala* farmers have given terracotta horses to their god *Kundīpa*.

Plate 4.36) Dozens of terracotta horses have been placed in a *Rathva* shrine to *Gamdev* in order to invoke his intercession against evil spirits (Ambala, Baroda District, Gujarat).

Plate 4.37) Potters brush and blow the ashes off newly fired terracotta horses as they open a temporary kiln in Deohati, Baroda District, Gujarat.

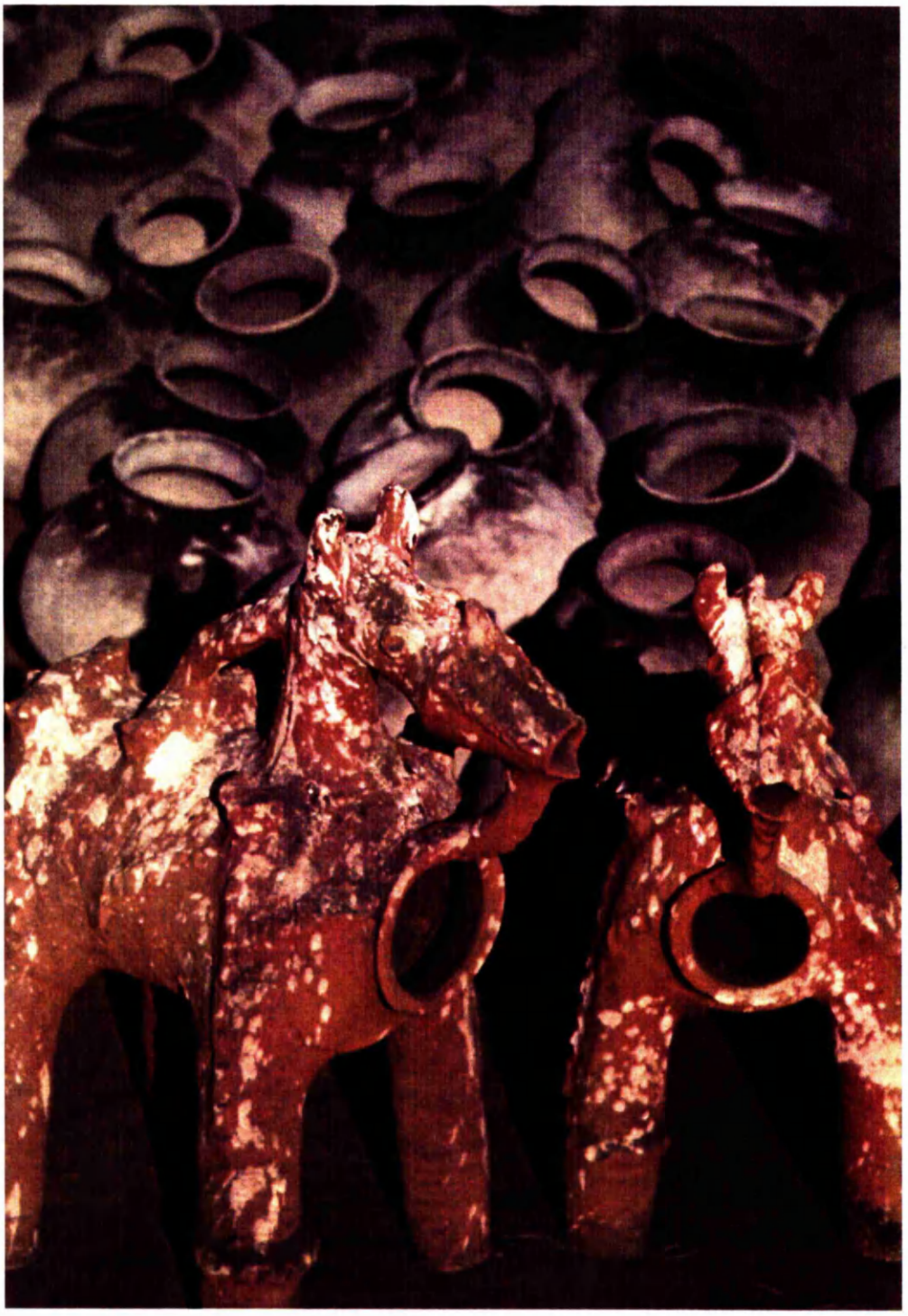

Plate 4.38) Standing outside a non-tribal potter's house, these two abstract horses are ready to be collected by the *Rathva* devotees who commissioned them (Bodeli, Baroda District, Gujarat).

Plate 4.39) A *Rathva* woman carries in procession her offering of a terracotta horse to the shrine (Bodeli, Baroda District, Gujarat).

Plate 4.40) A *Maru* potter in Molela, Udaipur District, Rajasthan, squats next to three finished plaques depicting *Gaṇeśa* (right) *Dharmarāj* (centre), and *Ratna Rebari* (left), the latter just painted according to a customer's wishes before it is picked up.

Plate 4.41) Six finished plaques stand beside a disused wheel at a potter's workshop in Molela, Udaipur District, Rajasthan, depicting from left to right: *Durgā Mātā*, *Dharmarāj*, *Nāgadeo*, *Ratna Rebari*, *Narpado Mātā*, and *Bhīmajī*.

Plate 4.42) A gigantic contemporary plaque (1.68 m x 1.22 m or 5.5' x 4') depicting genre scenes of Rajasthani life, has been sculpted by *Maru* potters to hang on the wall of a house in New Delhi.

Plate 4.43) The procession in from the fields on *Gaṅgaur*, the morning of the last eighteen days of ritual in Mandawa, Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan.

Plate 4.44) Gathering around a simple painted temporary 'shrine' to *Gaurī*, women sing songs praising her name while weaving plaits of *kuśa* grass to place in the bowl containing her images (Mandawa, Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan).

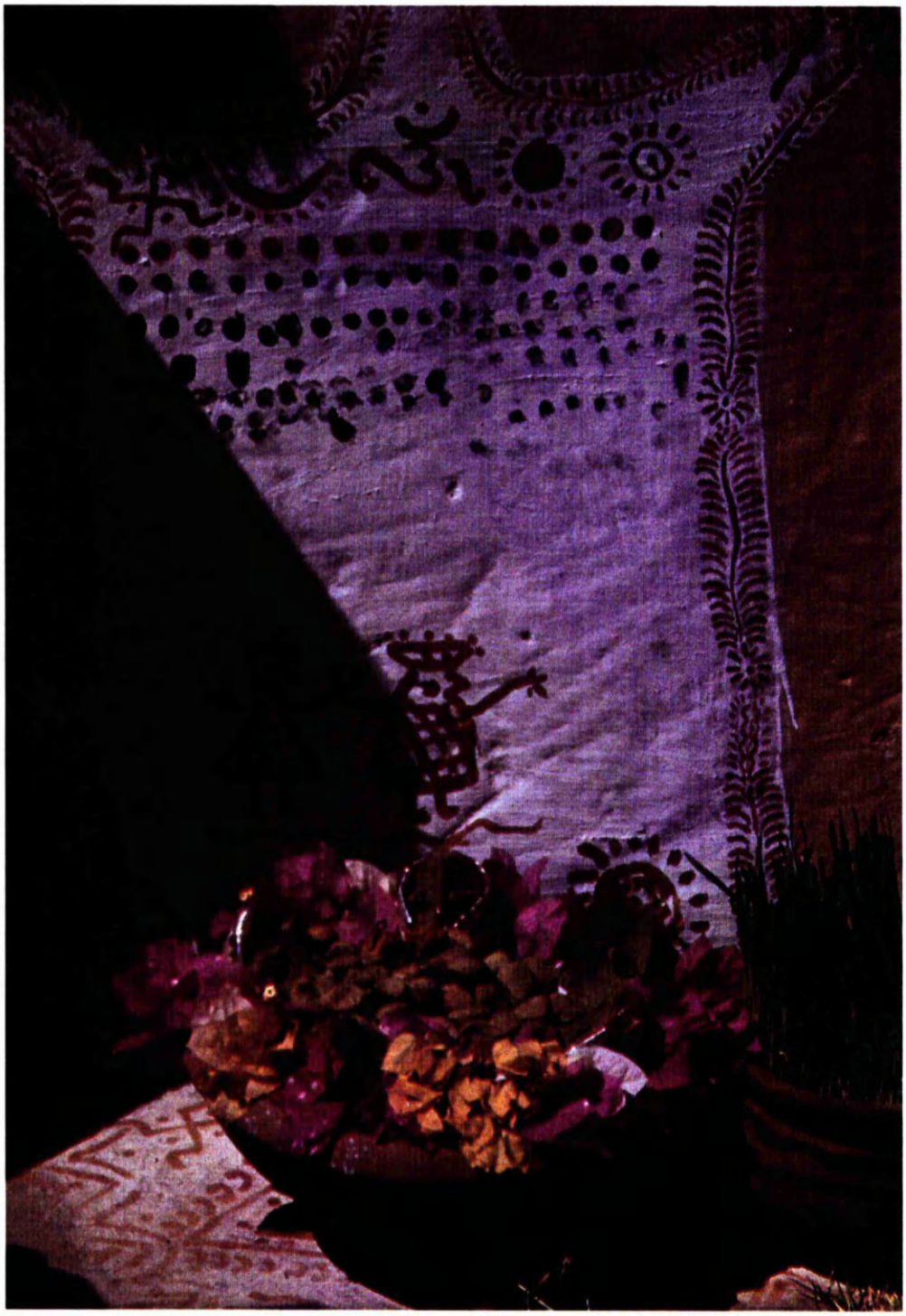

Plate 4.45) Standing before a mural of *Gaṅ* and *Gaurī* surmounted by eighteen dots made by each of the principle women in the worshipping family, a terracotta pot contains five crude unfired images of *Gaurī* and offerings of flowers and sweetmeats (Mandawa, Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan).

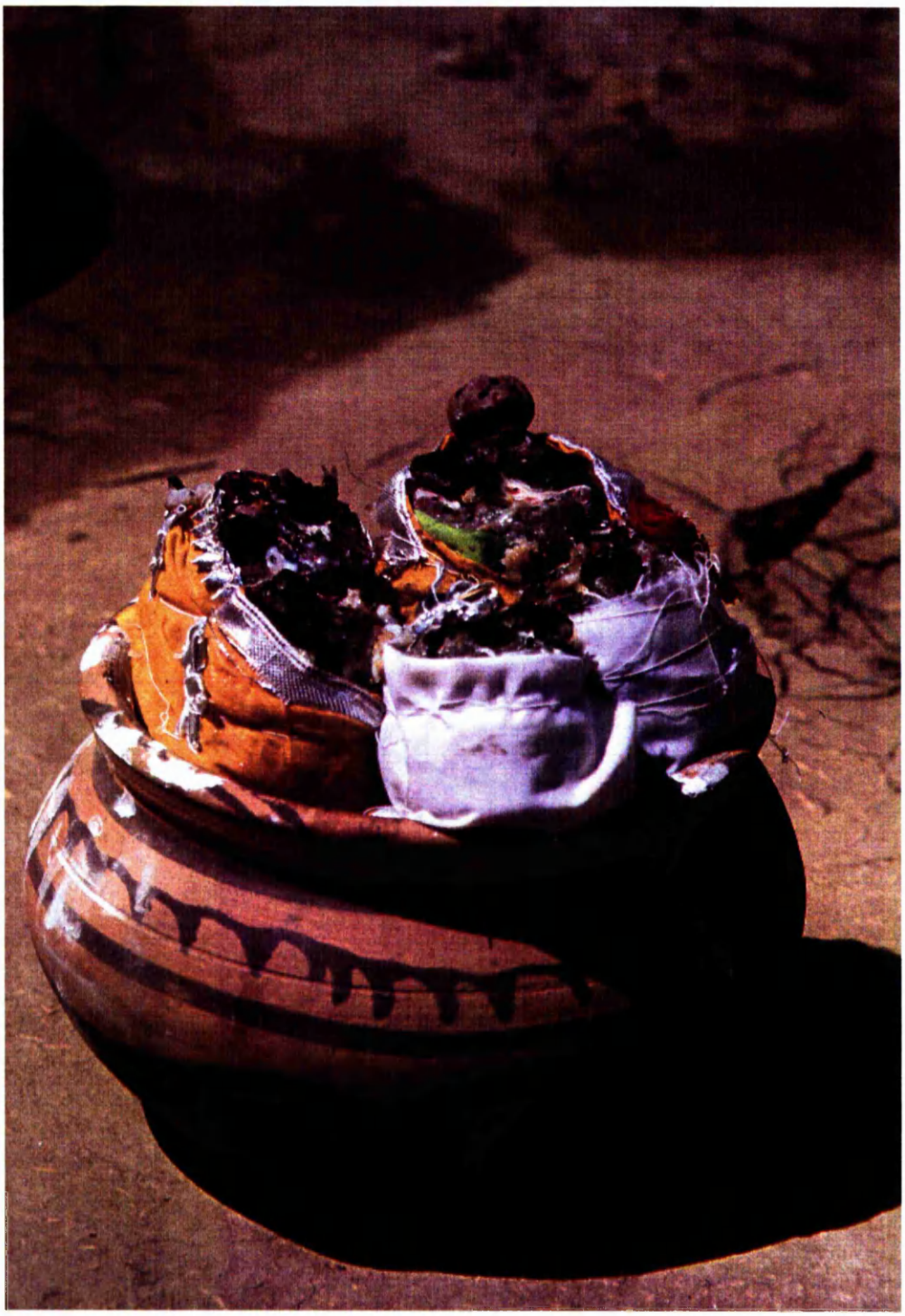

Plate 4.46) Wrapped in cloth filled with sweetmeats and other offerings, five mud images of *Gaurī*, resting in a painted clay pot, await being hoisted onto a woman's head to be carried for *darśan* with the goddess (Mandawa, Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan).

Plate 4.47) Carrying the vessel with the mud images, devotees converge upon the inner courtyard of Mandawa Palace (Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan) where they are met by all the other women in the community. Once there, they give offerings and receive *darśan* from the town images of *Gaurī* and *Gaṅ* (seen here at top centre between two servants bearing *cauris* (whisks).

Plate 4.48) In the last act of their *Gaṅgaur vrata*, the women of each family in Mandawa, Jhunjhunu District, Rajasthan, lift the red cloth covering their bowl, and pour its contents (images, sweetmeats, grasses, and flowers) into the well to decompose and dissolve.

Plate 4.49) Kumhar Pal, a potter in the city of Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, throws on his wheel solid cones of clay which will become the bases for *Gaṅgaur* figures.

Plate 4.50) Ronabai, the wife of Kumhar Pal, adds rolls and pinches of balls of clay to sculpt images of *Gaurī* and *Iśar* (Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh).

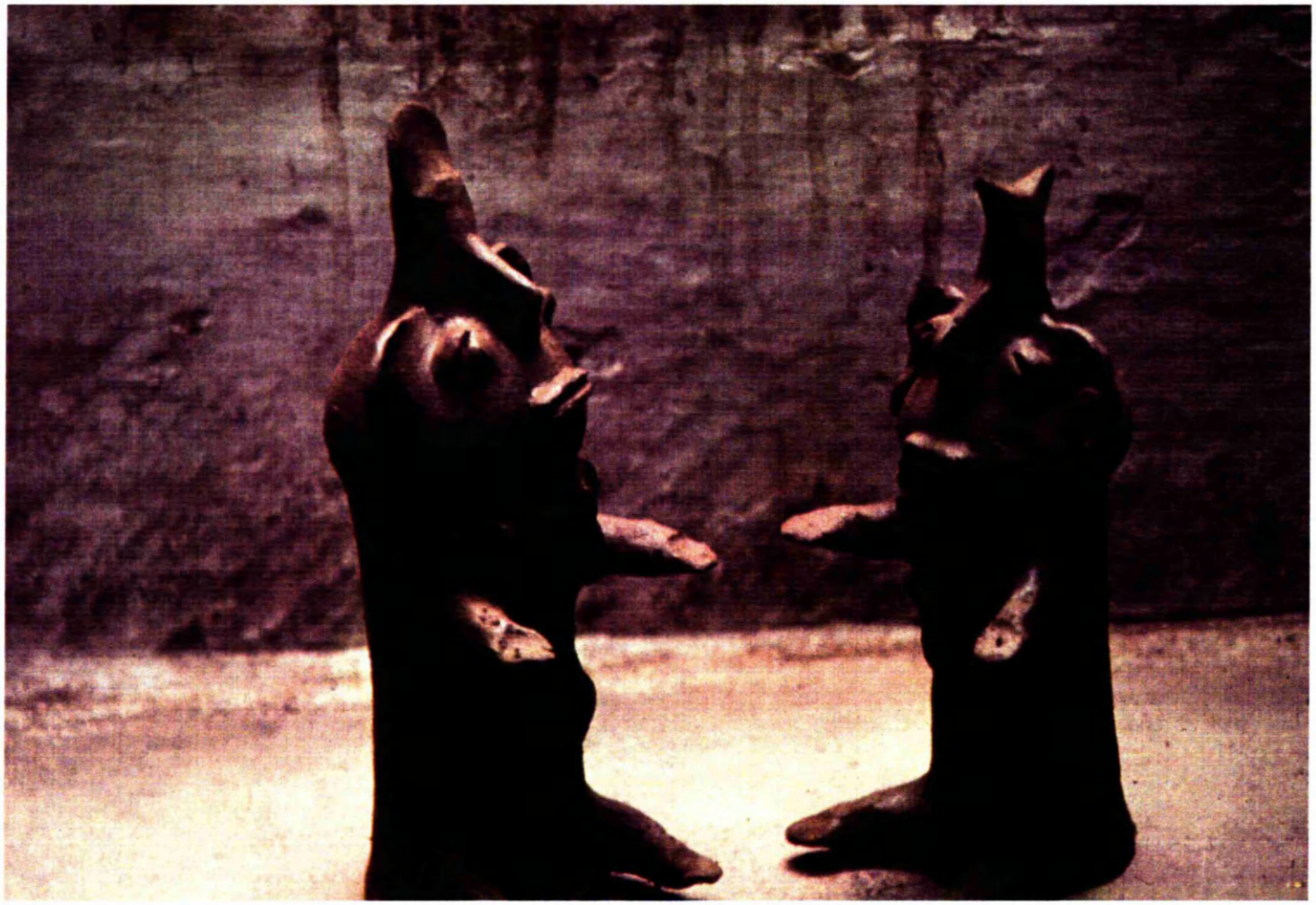

Plate 4.51) Finished, but unfired, images of *Gaurī* and *Iśar* sculpted for *Gaṅgaur* in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

Plate 4.52) Simply painted sculptures of horses, some with riders, await collection by devotees for use in *Bolīkī Pūjā* (Khajuraho, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh).

Plate 4.53) Along the roadside during the *Bolīkī* festival in Khajuraho, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh, a potter sells small terracotta horses to be used in a special *Pūjā* to *Śiva* .

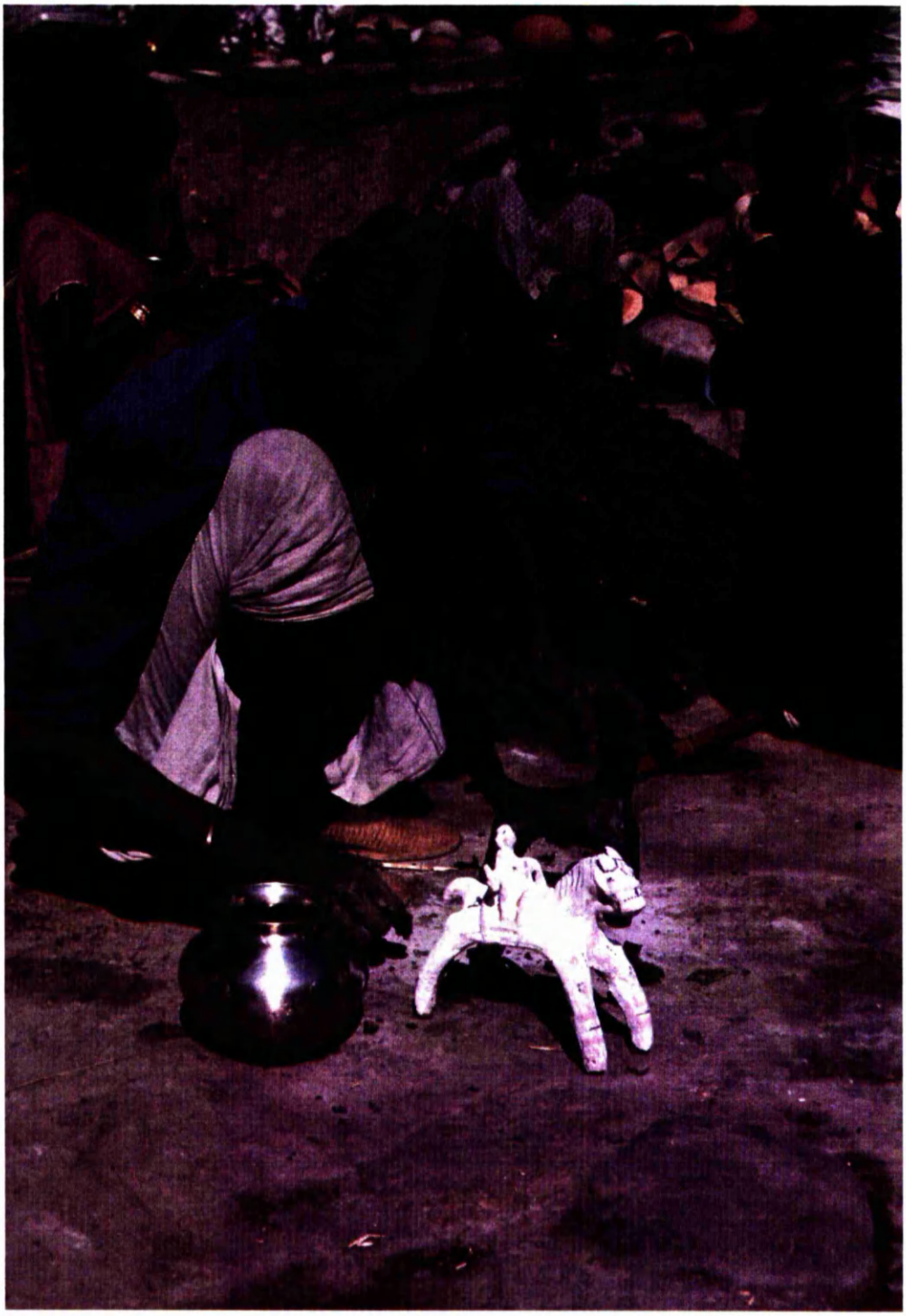

Plate 4.54) The potter Mani Ram sculpts a horse and rider for *Bolīkī* in Dhamna, Chhatarpur District, Madhya Pradesh.

Plate 4.55) Terracotta gifts honouring *Satī* in a shrine in Mirjamalpur, Azamgarh District, Uttar Pradesh.

Plate 4.56) The terracottas given to *Satī* in Mirjamalpur, Azamgarh District, Uttar Pradesh, are composed of large pots placed upside-down to which are sculpted images of the family of the devotee and large bird-shaped figures representing the release of the spirit.

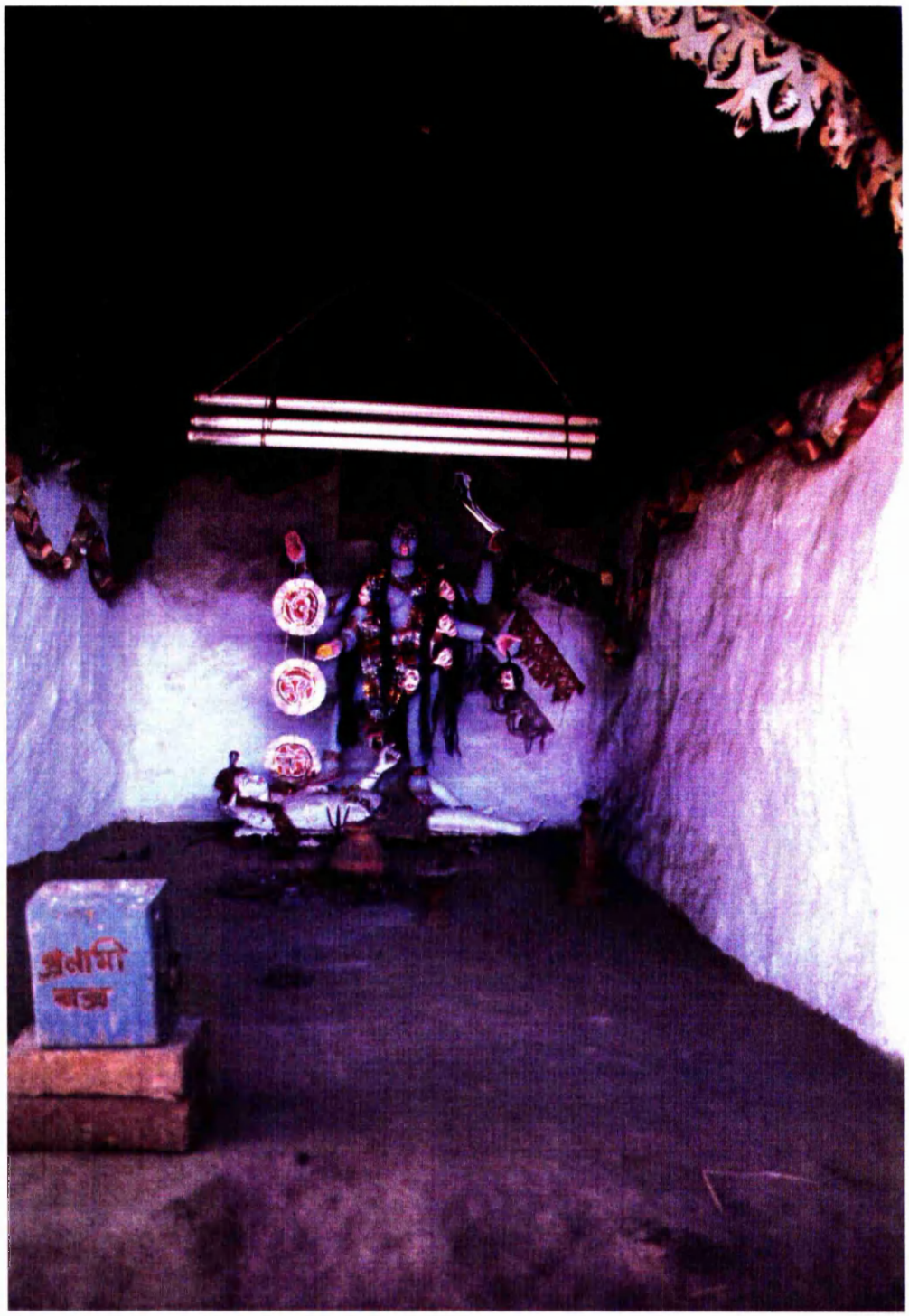

Plate 4.57) An unfired image of *Kālī* standing on the corpse of *Śiva* at Amral, Bankur District, West Bengal.

Plate 4.58) A gigantic panorama of unfired clay figures depicting *Mahiṣāsura Mardinī* with *Gaṇeśa* and attendants for *Navarātri* in Baragaon, Jaunpur District, Uttar Pradesh.

Plate 4.59) Almost 1.8 metres (6 feet) high, an unfired clay image of *Lakṣmī* dressed in a *sari* is part of a huge *Navarātri* panoramain Baragaon, Jaunpur District, Uttar Pradesh.

Plate 4.60) Unfired clay figures depicting gods and goddesses who have been worshipped during *Durgāpūjā* in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, are placed in the prows of wooden boats on the ninth and last day of the *Navarātri* festival. The boats are then rowed to the centre of the Ganges River, where the images are immersed and given back to the earth.

Plate 4.61) Large unfired festival images in the Gangetic Plain are sculpted by adding clay to a base of staw tied to a framework of sticks (*Chattha pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

Plate 4.62) A fine layer of clay is applied to those features of the figures which will remain unclothed (*Chattha Pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

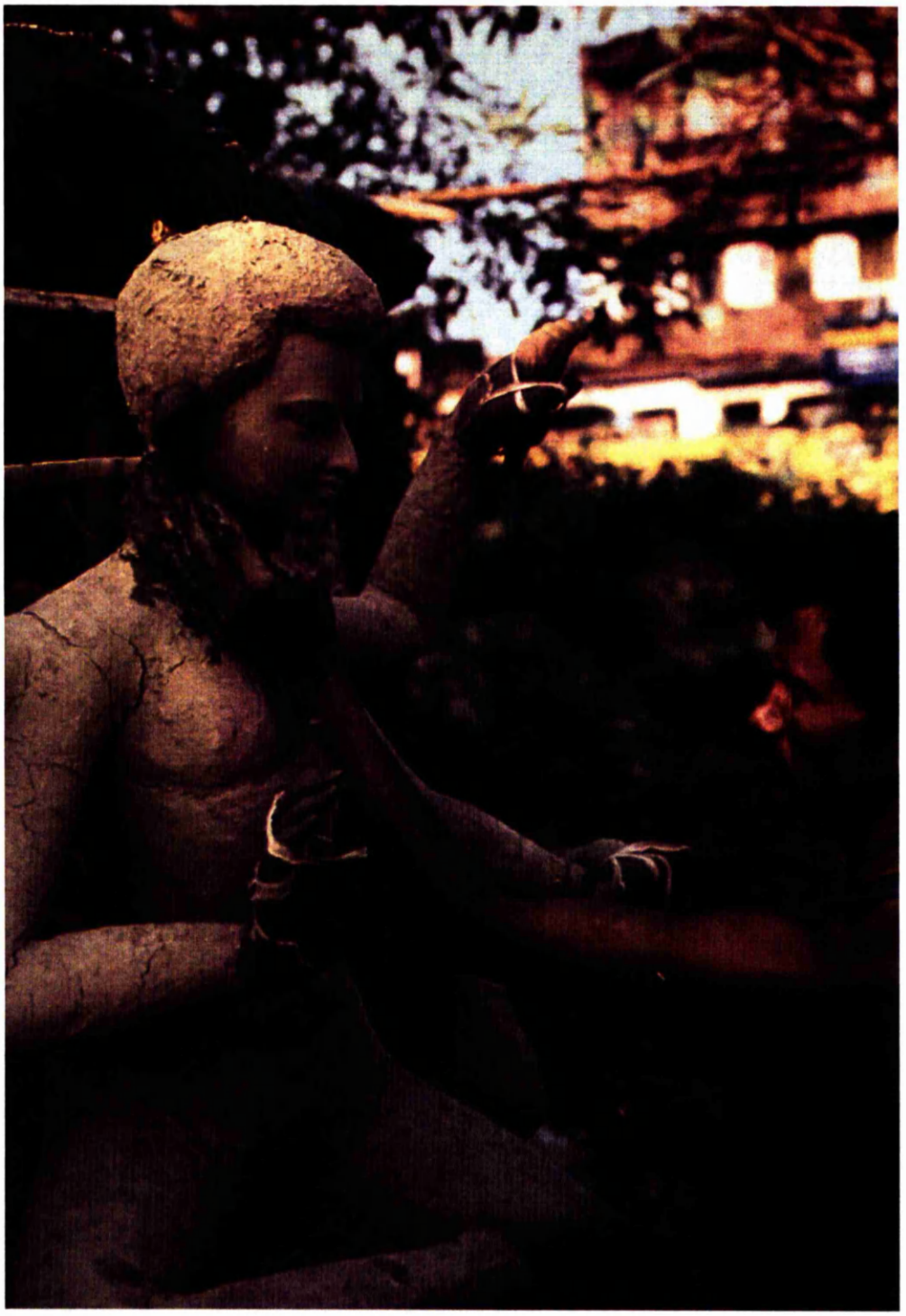

Plate 4.63) The central figure of *Sūrya* is the most important sculpture in the group, and the refined modelling of his face is reserved for one of the two master craftsmen, Rambabu Pandit (*Chattha Pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

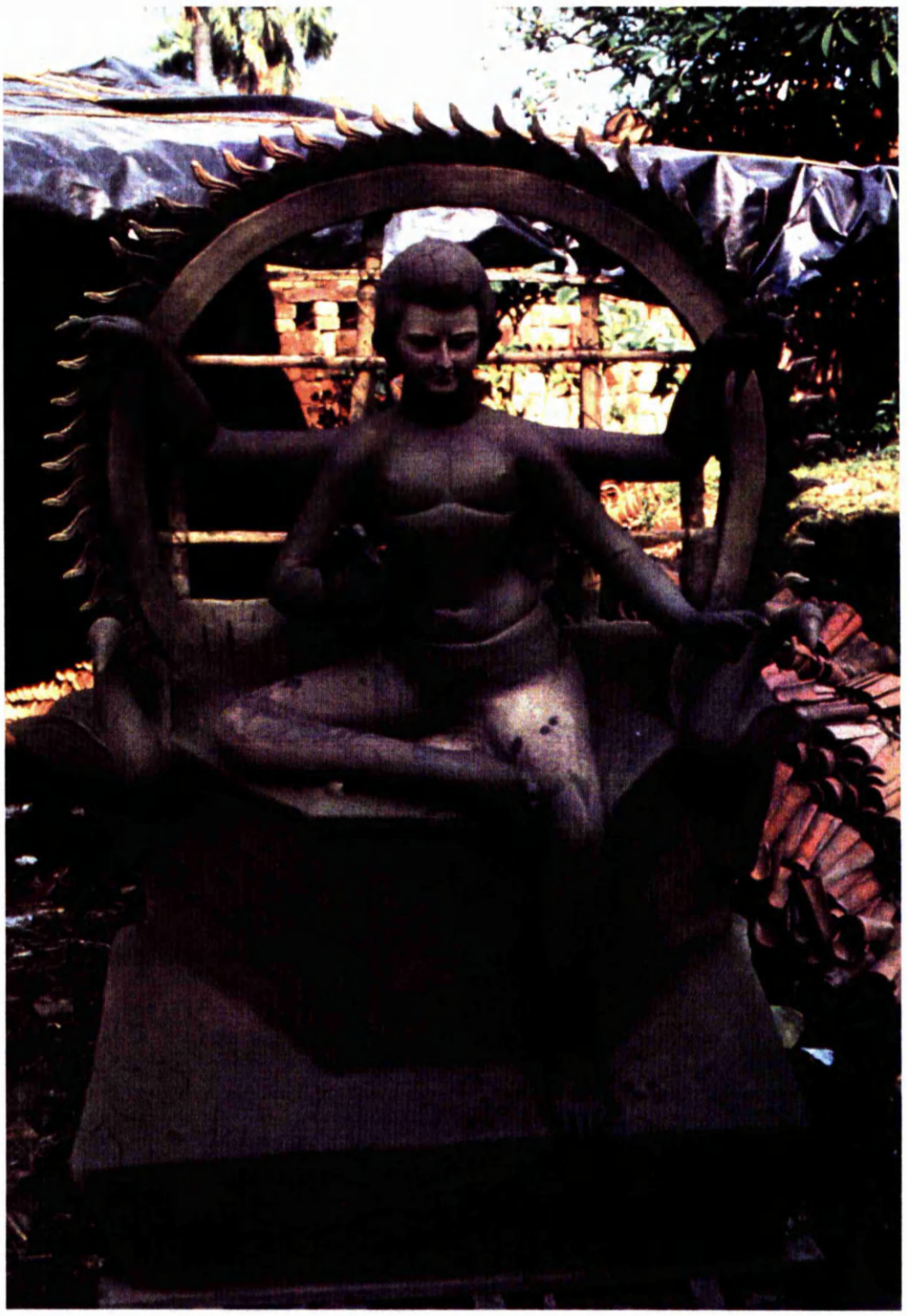

Plate 4.64) When all the sculpting details are finished, the image of *Sūrya*, shown seated within a ring of fire, is left to dry overnight (*Chattha Pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

Plate 4.65) The prancing horses that will draw *Sūrya*'s chariot stand drying in the hot sun (*Chattha pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

Plate 4.66) Mahesh Pandit mixes the paints to be used in decorating the visible portions of the clay figures (*Chattha pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

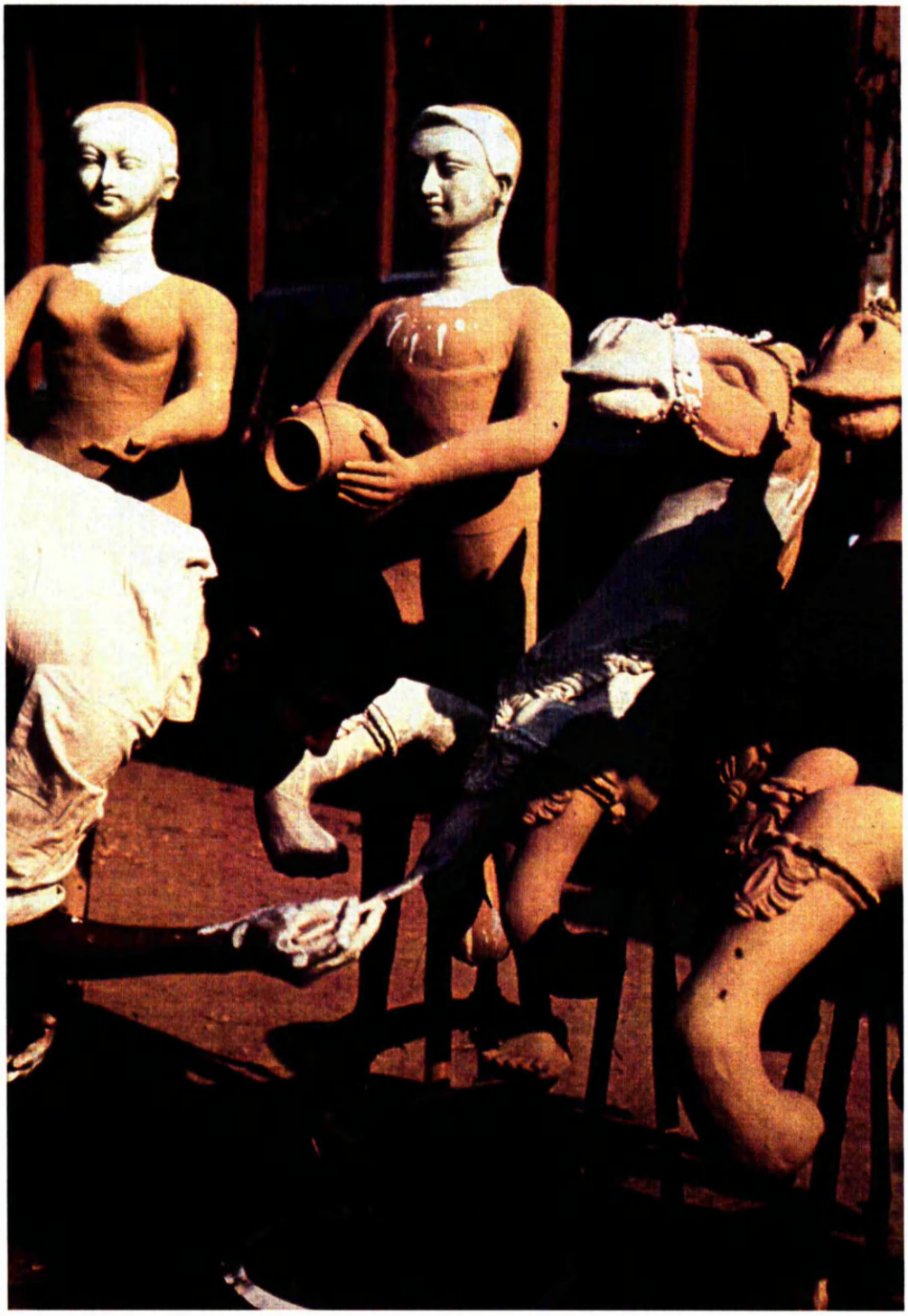

Plate 4.67) When they have dried, all the figures are painted with a base coat of whitewash (*Chattha Pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

Plate 4.68) Then the faces of all the human and divine figures are painted bright pink, with details in black, red, and blue (*Chattha pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

Plate 4.69) The senior craftsman, Mahesh Pandit, applies the final bright-coloured details to the image of *Sūrya* and dresses him with a wig, pith and paper jewellery, and silk clothing (*Chattha pūjā*, Patna, Bihar) [photo copyright Barbara Goodbody].

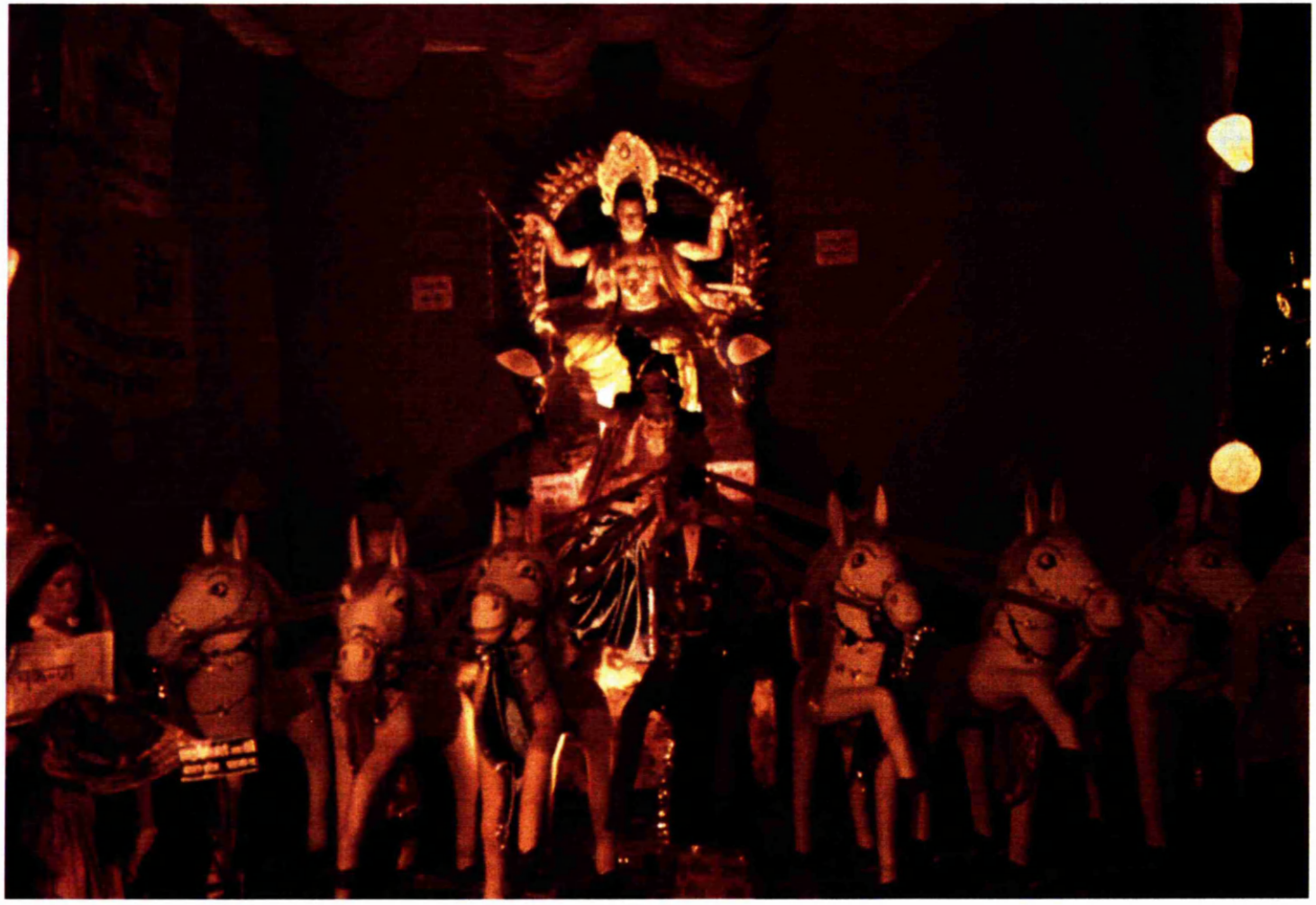

Plate 4.70) Fully decorated, dressed, and assembled the thirteen figures in the panorama are the recipients of almost constant *pūjās* for five days during the *Chattha* festival in Patna, Bihar.

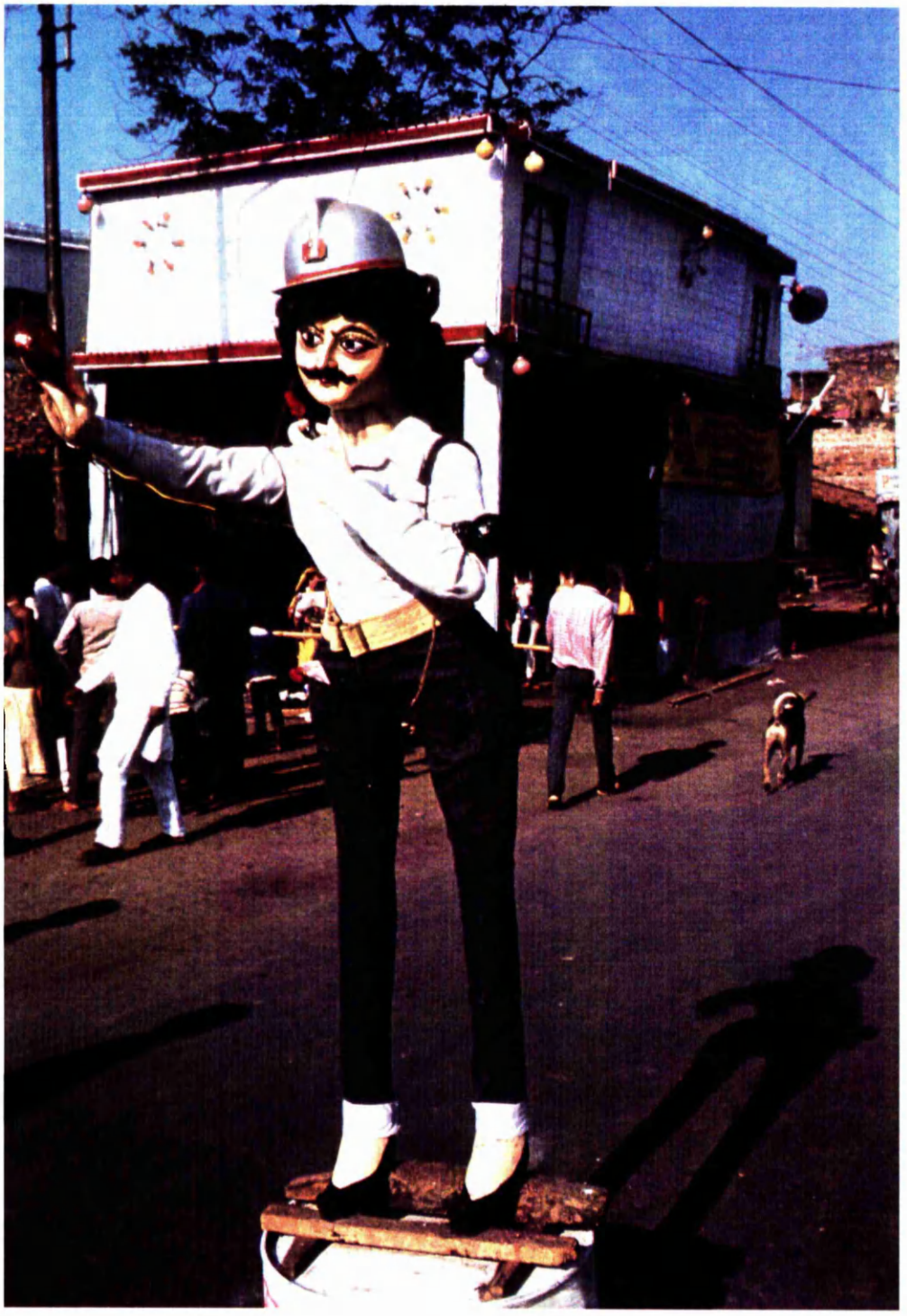

Plate 4.71) In the centre of the street outside the shrine, a sculpted policeman (first shown in Plate 4.62) blows a whistle and carries a red electric lightbulb to stop traffic so passersby might be encouraged to do *pūjā* there (*Chattha Pūjā*, Patna, Bihar).

Plate 4.72) At the end of the five days, the shrine is dismantled and all the figures are thrown into the nearby Ganges River where the clay and decorations dissolve in the current. Washed onto shore, the support structure remains as a skeletal reminder of *Chattha pūjā*(Patna, Bihar).

THE PRODUCTION AND USE OF RITUAL TERRACOTTAS IN INDIA

by Stephen P. Huyler

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The School Of Oriental And African Studies, University Of London
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CHAPTER FIVE
AYYĀNAR: A SURVEY AND CASE STUDY OF RITUAL TERRACOTTA HORSES GIVEN TO THE GOD AYYĀNAR IN CENTRAL TAMIL NADU

Outside almost every village in Tamil Nadu stand horses that protect their communities from invasions of evil spirits (Plate 5.1). These sculptures – some are tall, their majestic forms rising to the sky; others are short with brightly painted bodies grouped like cavalry in the trees – symbolize the efforts of southeastern Indian people to cope with their conditions: environmental, social, spiritual, and physical. More votive terracottas are sculpted and used today in this state than in any other part of India. Villagers take great pride in the style and beauty of the terracotta images they present to their gods. Many are elaborately decorated; some are the largest terracottas ever recorded. All are essential elements in the numerous rituals that encourage the continuity of Tamil traditions.

Although many cults and ceremonies in Tamil Nadu require the offering of terracottas, most are given to *Ayyānar* (Plate 5.2), the deity who guards the boundaries of Tamil communities.[1] Identified with *Harihara*, *Ayyānar* is the son of both *Śiva* and *Viṣṇu* (as *Mohinī*); as such, he is honoured by both *Śaivites* and *Vaiṣṇavites*, adherents of the two major (and often

[1] *Ayyānar* has been the subject of many short articles and small sections of books; but aside from a few pages in Stella Kramrisch's *Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village* [pp 56-57], nothing of any note has ever been published. The only detailed research on Tamil potters is the published works of Stephen Inglis derived from his unpublished thesis for the University of British Columbia entitled *Creators and Consecrators: A Potter Community of South Asia* (1984). His research is based upon documentation of a subcaste of potters, the *Pantiya Velar*, of Arappalaiyyam, a village suburb of Madurai, and is focused upon their ritual roles. The *Velar* sculpt images and serve the shrines of many different deities, and the god *Ayyānar* is discussed in his thesis only on pp 253-254 & 282-283. Although Inglis' works have been invaluable in the writing of this thesis, at the time in which the bulk of this field research was conducted, it was not yet available. The material for Chapter Five is comprised of surveys of *Ayyānar* shrines and interviews of potters throughout Tamil Nadu, with special atttention given to South Arcot District, and upon a potter of the *Pathar* subcaste. The surveys were conducted in 1971-72, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, and 1988, and were greatlly aided by translations by Śiva Kumar and Srinivasin, both of Madras.

opposing) Hindu sects. A story relates *Ayyānar*'s unusual birth.[2] The ferocious demon *Mahiṣasuran* performed a severe penance to *Śiva* and then requested a special boon – that he, the demon, might be empowered to destroy anyone simply by placing his hand above that being's head. *Śiva* granted the boon, whereupon the demon vowed to test his new power upon *Śiva* himself and began to chase the god through the forest. *Śiva*, realizing that he had unwittingly granted a power that could indeed destroy himself, hid inside an unripe nīm fruit. The demon, unable to find *Śiva*, changed himself into a gigantic goat and began to eat the entire forest. *Viṣṇu* became aware of *Śiva*'s predicament and, realizing that the entire universe would dissolve if *Śiva* were destroyed, decided to intervene. *Viṣṇu* changed himself into *Mohinī*, the most beautiful and sensuous woman ever created, and called to the demon. *Mahiṣasuran* saw *Mohinī* and was overcome with passion for her. *Mohinī* told *Mahiṣasuran* that he could make love to her only if he would wash his filthy body first. She sent him in all four directions looking for water, which he finally found in the north. While washing himself, he placed his own hand above his head and was destroyed immediately. *Viṣṇu*, back in his original form, went to the nīm fruit in which *Śiva* was still hiding and tried to coax him out, telling him how he, *Viṣṇu*, had outwitted the demon. *Śiva*, still frightened, refused to emerge. *Viṣṇu* then transformed himself back into *Mohinī* to prove his story, and *Śiva*, peeking out of the nīm fruit, was overcome by uncontrollable lust for the beautiful woman. In a fraction of a second, *Śiva* rose out of the fruit and embraced *Mohinī*, ejaculating prematurely. *Viṣṇu* as *Mohinī*, fearing the cataclysmic effect that *Śiva*'s sperm would have on all the

[2]As told to the author by E. Dhanakodi, a priest in the *Ayyānar* shrine at Vadakalpattu, near Cuddalore, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu. It is quite likely that this popular story is a form of "Sanskritisation" originally intended to legitimize a local, possibly pre-Aryan, deity by giving him classical ancestry.

worlds if it fell onto the ground, caught *Śiva*'s seed in his/her hand – and there gave birth to *Ayyānar*. Consequently, *Ayyānar* is truly the offspring of the two principal male Hindu deities.[3] Worship in his shrines — set apart from community centres and from major temples — unites the two Hindu sects and all castes in worship.

Each *Ayyānar* sanctuary, usually situated in trees and often near water, has as its focus a stucco or clay image of the god (Plate 5.3).[4] He is

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[3] Many other versions exist of this legend. Kramrisch [*Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, p 56] stated: "*Aiyanar*, the Lord, is the son of the two great Hindu gods — *Śiva*, the ascetic Creator-Destroyer; and *Viṣṇu*, the Preserver. In order to arouse *Śiva*, *Viṣṇu* assumed the shape of a wonderfully beautiful girl called *Mohinī*, or Delusion. She excited *Śiva*, and he let his seed fall near the waters. From it, *Aiyanar*, the son of *Śiva* and *Viṣṇu* (*Hariharaputra*) was born. A king, while hunting, found the beautiful babe lying on the ground, crying but his face radiant with a thousand suns." Commenting further, Nanditha Krishna [p 63] wrote: "*Ayyanar* has been identified with *Hariharaputra* in some of the larger villages and towns. *Hariharaputra* is the son of the divine union of *Siva* or *Hara* and *Visnu* or *Hari* when he took the form of *Mohini*. Their son, *Hariharaputra*, is also known as *Shastha* and is associated with animals, of whom he is the protector. *Ayyanar*'s association with animals probably suggested this connection and thus facilitated his absorption into Hinduism." Pria Devi [p 84] wrote: "In south India, where the *Saiva* and *Vaisnava* sects have their traditional stronghold, *Aiyyanar* is the '*Hari-Hara Putra*' i.e. the son of *Śiva* and *Viṣṇu* (when he took the form of *Mohinī*, the Enchantress.) It is perhaps because of this that he is known as '*Dharma-shasta*' or simply '*Shasta*': 'He before whom laws cease'. " And Jayakar [p 222] also stated: "*Ayānar*, *Śāsta*, *Śiva*, *Keśavanandana*, the chief of the *Bhūtas*, the mighty male *Grāma Devatā* of Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Coorg, is the son of *Śiva* and *Viṣṇu* in his form as *Mohinī*, the Enchantress who, to save the world from the demons, awakened to passion the Great *Yogī Śiva* as he sat in meditation." See also duBois p 41.

[4] Tamil Nadu is one of the few Indian states in which primary images of deities are sometimes sculpted of clay, although these images are still rare when compared to those composed of stone, bronze, or stucco. Of the fifty-seven *Ayyānar* shrines documented for this thesis, terracotta images of *Ayyānar* were discovered in only six. Almost all images of the god are of stucco sculpted upon brick bases. Inglis [Creators and Consecrators, pp 222-223] comments on Tamil terracotta images, although he refers herein to both primary images and those given as parts of votive offerings: "Very little has been written about the use and special role of earthen images in South Indian worship. Part of the reason for this may be that this tradition exists apart from, and in fact conflicts with, rules of image making prescribed in classical Indian texts which form the basis of most studies of Indian religion and ritual. Although clay has been considered one of the four main materials appropriate for shaping an image of a deity and has apparently been used for making images since the third millenium B.C. [Varma p 109], the worship of baked clay or terracotta images, which are by far the most common type in South India, is widely prohibited. In the *Akama* texts, for example, which have been important sources for understanding South Indian worship, 'a preference is clearly stated for unbaked images' ... . Also reported is the injunction against making images of terracotta, 'except when the aim is destructive results' [Varma p 192]. Based on these common sources, the actual widespread use of baked clay images presents a fact which is, on the surface, difficult to reconcile with Hindu texts which refer to the use of images. ... It is not surprising that local traditions of image making would receive little notice in *Brahmanical* Hindu texts which undertake to prescribe ideal behaviour based in the function of great temples and the conduct of ritual by *Brahmans*. That there is a proclaimed prohibition against the use of baked clay images in these texts is perhaps the reflection of a tension between the *Brahmanical* norms of the worship, which emphasize images of permanent materials and those of local religious traditions in which earthen images are prominent. Whereas the stone or metal image of the *Brahmanical* temple

always depicted as proud and authoritative, seated in an attitude of dispensing justice.[5] The worship of *Ayyānar* is ancient in Tamil Nadu, probably derived from honouring a warrior-hero who was later deified — similar to the cult of *Revanta* in North India.[6] *Ayyānar*, known also as *Sāstha*, *Māsāttan*, or *Bhūtanātha*, is a folk deity with strong classical ties.[7] The earliest sculptures of *Ayyānar* date from the seventh century[8], although it is possible that his identity emerged from the worship of *Iyen* or *Iya*, a hero mentioned in early Jain and Buddhist texts.[9] Each Tamil village, or group of villages, has its own shrine to *Ayyānar* (there are thousands of these shrines in the state), and although his role as protector of boundaries is constant, his title and specific function vary from community to community.[10] In many

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accumulates potency as a focus of divine presence through continual use over decades, centuries and millenia, the earthen image begins its essential deterioration and destruction immediately after its use in a single festival. Images made of permanent materials become symbolic of the timelessness, detachment and omnipotence of the great deities in whose likeness they are modelled. The images modelled by the *Velar* (potter), constantly recycled with the seasons, are more suitable containers of the capricious and dangerous deities which determine the ebb and flow of everyday life."

[5] Vaithyalinga Pathar, a potter from South Arcot District, commented: "*Ayyānar's* face should bear a smile. It should not be laughing. *Ayyānar's* face should also be serene and not fierce. Only the *Vīran* images found in the *Ayyānar* shrine should appear fearful. As the *Ayyānar* is supposed to look after the welfare of the villagers and crops he should look serene."

[6] According to Nagaswami [p 49]: "One of the main forms of the classical deity which was considered a folk deity adored by hunters when they started on hunting expeditions, is called *Revanta*, said to be the son of *Surya*. He was often portrayed riding a horse, accompanied by dogs and hunters. From number of sculptures found in northern India, he seems to have been worshipped by large sections of hunters in the early historical period. It seems that this concept of *Revanta*, the God riding a horse, accompanied by dogs, has taken the shape of *Ayyan Mahāsāstha* popularly called *Aiyanar* in southern India." Nagaswami goes on to say that *Ayyānar's* representation in many art forms, particularly in Kerala, confirms his identity as *Revanta*, and that *Revanta* is mentioned as one of the titles of *Sastha* in an early text from Kerala, the *Tantrasamuchaya*. Pria Devi [p 84] states: "The Tamil *Aiyyanar* however is also known as '*Arya Putra*'. There are some fine early mediæval bronzes of him. Andi it is possible that the post-*vedik* (sic) myth of *Revantara*, the hunter accompanied by his dog, son of the Sun and Dawn, married into local cults of the *Vīran*. The *Vīran*: ancestral hero or 'brave' of local battle and/or cattle-raid frequently became the city-guardian like the famous '*Madurai-Vīran*. *Aiyyanar* is the Night Rider accompanied by a dog and is guardian-deity of the village." See also Sharma *Iconography of Revanta*.

[7] Kramrisch *Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, p 57. *Sāstha* is mentioned in an ancient Tamil text, the *Silippadikāram*. [Nagaswami pp. 49-50] *Sāstha*, from the root 'to guide'. The root for *Ayyānar* is '*Ayyā*', meaning 'gifts'.

[8] Ibid. p 5.

[9] Dr. Frederic Clothi, University of Pitzburg (personal discussion).

[10] Inglis [p 250] points out that although there are thousands of temples dedicated to *Ayyānar* in Tamil Nadu, in each case he is considered to be the tutelary deity (ie. the *Ayyānar* of Nellikuppam, or the *Ayyānar* of Semakottai, refering to that specific village).

shrines, *Ayyānar* is depicted as flanked by his two consorts, *Pūrṇā* and *Puṣkalā* (also known as *Pūranī* and *Pūrselai*), who are believed to add both fire and tranquillity to his judgements (Plates 5.4 & 5.5 and Plate 3.9).[11]

When properly beseeched, *Ayyānar* enlists the help of his spiritual soldiers, *Vīran*, powerful warriors who battle the demons of disease, infertility, flood, drought and all natural and human calamities that might befall his devotees. Like that of many warriors, their anger and ferocity are feared.[12] According to local custom, *Ayyānar* should not be approached unaware by common man; his shrines are situated on the farthest edge of the

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Kramrisch [*Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, p 56] states: "While he is the same everywhere, each time it is a different *Aiyanar* who is worshipped."

11 Nagaswami p 50.

12 The Stutley's [p 334] identify *Vīra* as a "'Hero, chief, leader'. An epithet applied to *Vedic* gods like *Indra* and the solar *Viṣṇu*, and later to the *Buddha* and the *Jaina Mahavīra*; to any eminent *siddha* who has overcome all earthly impediments by *tapas* (austerity), and to any national or legendary hero. Those who died valiantly in battle were transported by *apsarasas* in brillant chariots to *Indra*'s heaven, 'the haven of heroes' (*vīragati*). *Vīra* is also applied to *Śiva*, the 'chief of heroes' (*vīreśvara*). Heroes were sometimes regarded as 'part' of a deity born on earth, or as a unified portion of certain divine powers." According to Jayakar [pp 193-194]: "*Vīra* ...is a word used for the ancestors, the valiant warriors killed in battle while protecting women, fields and cattle. It is also the word for the *Siddhas*, the enlightened ones, the alchemists, *Yogis* and magicians who were conquerors of body and mind. The *Vīra* cult has very ancient origins. The two rampant tigers protecting the Earth Mother, from whose womb plants sprout, and the two male cobras protecting the *Yogi*, pictured in the Indus Valley seals, are indicative of the archaic role of the *Vīras* and the *Ksetrapalas*." Krishna [p 61] wrote that *Ayyānar* "is regarded as the night watchman of the village which he is supposed to patrol every night, mounted on his ghostly steed. He is a figure of ferocity, with an enormous moustache, prominent teeth and a sword held in readiness. *Ayyānar* is the commander of the demon hosts, who protects the villagers from the evil demons. The evil demons may take the form of drought, disease, enemies or even disgruntled ghosts of the dead. He has several *Veerans* — 'brave ones' — or generals to assist him in his nightly task." Kramrisch [*Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, p 57] commented: "The Lord, *Aiyenar*, the guardian of the land, has his generals and lieutenants. They are heroes (*Vīra*), that is they are the souls of those who died in battle. They are joined by the host of demons, foremost *Karuppan*, the Dark God, who is all that *Aiyenar* is not. He is the adversary to whom blood sacrifices are due. Aiyenar is worshipped with flowers and fruits. The dark power within *Aiyenar*, the Hunter, has been hypostatized into *Karuppan*, his alter ego, the demon as protector. Together they are worshipped by the officiating priest who also is the maker of their images. He is the village potter."
In South Arcot District, where most of the field research for this chapter took place, although *Ayyānar*'s devotees admitted fear of *Ayyānar* and his *Vīran*, they denied any connection between *Ayyānar* and *Karuppan*, and claimed that *Ayyānar*'s worship had nothing to do with this 'dark power'. Soldiers astride rearing and rampant horses, whose front hooves are resting upon the shoulders of an attendant groom, adorn the stone pillars of the *Mīnākṣī* temple in Madurai and the Srirangam temple. Called *Madurai Vīran* they represent a seventh century martyred Madurai hero who was consort of the goddess *Mīnākṣī*. In some villages he is attendant to the goddess *Mariamma*, and both are worshipped with sacrifices of sheep, buffalos, and chickens. Occasionally the *Ayyānar*'s *Vīran* are confused with *Madurai Vīran*, and sometimes the former are given the latter's pronounced shape, most often in stucco by modern sculptors.

community (Plate 5.6) — not only so that the boundaries may be protected, but also that *Ayyānar*'s temper might not be provoked unwittingly and result in harm to nearby inhabitants. This god's potential wrath may be appeased only by contacting him through one of his *pujārīs* , who are never *Brāhman.*[13] His worship is believed by his devotees to be *adi-Brāhman,* predating the *Vedic Brāhman* forms of ritual, and his priests come from many castes.[14] Most of the priests who serve *Ayyānar* and act as intermediaries between him and his supplicants are the potters who make the terracotta images that fill his sanctuaries.

Kulalar (potters) are well respected in Tamil Nadu and their products honoured. Although technically *Śūdra*, one of the 'inferior' castes, they are highly regarded in many communities. Their roles as priests for *Ayyānar* and other local deities — the intermediaries between man and his gods and the

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[13] Whitehead pp 18, 30, & 33. Krishna [p 62] recorded that unlike other village deities, *Ayyānar*'s priests are *Brāhman* because he is never offered animal sacrifices. Although this may be the case at an isolated shrine, this survey and and all other published records indicate that this *Brāhman purohit* is an exception. Also animal sacrifices are made in *Ayyānar* shrines. Regarding *Ayyānar*'s discordant nature, Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators*, pp 282-283] wrote: "*Aiyanar*, over whom the *Velar* exercise exclusive rights as priests in their areas of service, presents an image to outsiders which is 'contradictory' and 'problematic'. He is depicted as both a priest and a king, as either celibate or with two consorts, of classical birth but of local jurisdiction. *Aiyanar* is worshipped in separation from the other deities with whom he shares his temples yet is believed to ride with them to guard the village boundary."

[14] Vaithyalinga Pathar, the potter-priest of South Arcot District upon whom most of this chapter is based, stated: "What need have we of *Brāhmans*? They do not serve our gods and have nothing to do with them. They have their own practices which are not as old as ours. They have come into this land and with them they bring their beliefs, but ours is a more ancient belief. Ours is the spirit of the land, of this place. Our gods are the true gods of Tamil Nadu, and we worship them as we were trained by our fathers and their fathers and their fathers' fathers'. It has always been like this." Refering to his thesis documentation of the *Velar*, potter-priests of Madurai District, Stephen Inglis [pp 278-281] wrote: "The *Velar* have virtually no contact with *Brahmans* on a daily basis and the priestly work of the two groups rarely overlaps, yet the *Velar* definition of their own role as priests for local rituals includes a lively internal debate with what are perceived as ideals of *Brahman* heredity, skill, and behaviour. This debate takes two different directions, often simultaneously. First, the *Velar* assert an inherent superiority to *Brahmans* by birth through the claim that the *Velar* are *'ati-Brahman'* or 'original-*Brahman*'. In this way they claim to be 'true' *Brahmans*, superior in their role as priests, as opposed to those spurious priests who came later and usurped the title, *'Brahman'*, and many other priviledges. ...Perhaps even more characteristic of the particular way in which the *Velar* conceive of their priesthood is, however, the notion of a superiority over *Brahmans* not through order of birth, but through confrontation. The defeat of *Brahmans* by potters, according to this notion, is due to the superiority of the particular type of power which the potter brings to bear through his priesthood."

direct spokesmen for gods' instructions — gives them an indefinable power in Tamil villages. Over two hundred thousand *Kulalar* live and work in this state[15], divided into several different subcastes, among them the *Udayar* of the region surrounding Chidambaram, the *Velar* of the region of Madurai, and the *Pathar* of the region of Cuddalore. All believe they descend from the same ancestor, *Kulalamuni*, who received his gift of tools and technology and his position as creator of sacred and mundane vessels and sculptures directly from *Brahma*, who also provided this honour to be continued by all of *Kulalamuni*'s descendents.[16] As craftsmen, they transform sacred earth into objects of utility and divinity; as artists they act as conduits for divine power, invoking life into clay vessels and images; as priests they bridge that fearful chasm between the world of gods and men, bringing the gods' words and healing power to mankind.[17]

Each village has developed its own rituals and customs to honour *Ayyānar*. In annual festivals throughout Tamil Nadu, terracotta horses are

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[15] Inglis *Creators and Consecrators*, p 62. In his thesis, Inglis [ibid. pp 50-58] gives detailed references to Tamil potters made by early western travelers, civil service officers, and academics.

[16] "The story of *Kulalamuni*, told in the *Kulala Purana* (section II, page 70) indicates the source of the power of the *Velar* priesthood. *Kulalamani*, the first potter, had renounced the world and was meditating in order to receive a boon from the gods. When asked by *Brahma* why he was doing this, *Kulalamuni* replied that he had been abused by everyone and wished to secure the assistance and constant company of *Aiyanar* (Lord of local deities). *Brahma* granted the boon, telling *Kulalamuni* that *Aiyanar* would become his family deity, that potters would be the priests of *Aiyanar* and that the enemies of potters would be defeated. *Brahma* promised that the descendents of *Kulalamuni* would 'control and rule' [Inglis Creators and Consecrators, p 280]." Inglis goes on to relate other stories from the *Kulala Purana* in which the results of contests of power and prestige between *Brāhmans* and potters prove that potters are far superior. Corroborating this belief, Vaithyalinga Pathar stated: "I am the *pujārī, vāttiyār* (priest), for Lord *Ayyānar*. I perform the *pūjās* to him for all the village people who want his help. My brother (deceased) was also his *pujārī*, as was my father. This duty has been given to us from earliest time by *Brahma* himself. We do our duty as best we can."

[17] Refering to Tamil potters, Kramrisch [*Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, p 58] wrote: "Himself potter and priest, he moulds the clay horses, impressing the clay with tensions experienced in shamanistic possession. The clay itself is taken from a ground of sacred fertility. It holds the *linga* of *Shiva* and the seed from which *Aiyanar* has sprung. *Aiyanar*, the Lord, scion of the two great Hindu gods, King of Demons, synthesis of deity experienced on the many levels of India's religious structure, depends on the clay horses offered to him for this rides. Their power is vested in the soil from which they are made. It does not extend beyond the Tamil village and its autochthonous art."

placed near *Ayyānar*'s image in the belief that his power transforms the clay into living mounts in the spirit world for his *Vīran*, who ride them in their nightly war against the forces of evil (Plate 5.7).[18] In some shrines, as many as a hundred such horses are given each year, added to the herds of previous years (Plate 5.8), while in others, an entire community may combine resources to commission one immense terracotta horse whose donation will benefit everyone (Plate 5.9).[19] These and other Tamil terracottas are intended to be ephemeral: the broken pieces generally are thrown onto heaps that contain the remains of centuries of votive rituals. As elsewhere in India, these terracottas may well be vestiges of ancient practices of animal sacrifices, and are in some cases the poor man's alternative, although the patronage required for the donation of a large terracotta horse could hardly be regarded as the result of economic restrictions. Animal sacrifices still take place in some

[18] In 1909, Thurston [p 192] wrote: "Horses made of clay, hollow and painted red and other colours, are set up in the fields to drive away demons, or in thanksgiving for recovery from sickness or any piece of good luck. The villagers erect these horses in honour of the popular deity *Aiyanar*, the guardian of the fields, who is a renowned huntsman, and is believed ...(to visit) ...the village at night, to mount the horses, and ride down the demons." Recently Krishna commented further [p 63]: "The most interesting feature of the worship of *Ayyānar* is the offering of horses. The compound is filled with terracotta horses, up to 15 feet in height, elaborately camparisoned with harnesses of bells, mirrors and faces of *Kirtimukha* and *Makaras*. The horses are baked and painted in gay colours and stand in the open, awaiting their nightly journey. They are the offerings of villagers (generally the more well-to-do) in fulfillment of vows taken for the propitiation of material ends. The terracotta horse is a divine reflection of *Ayyānar*'s powers to protect the village and ensure its welfare. Why offer a horse, an animal which is foreign to Tamil Nadu? The probable explanation is that the horse was reminiscent of the chieftains and kings who were the overlords and protectors of the villages within their region. The horse was their symbol of speed, maneuverability and power, on which they protected their lands and attacked other territories, and performed feats of heroism and valour. The strength, power and prowess of the local hero-kings was transferred to *Ayyānar*, the protector, and the steed which gave them their power in battle became his mount. The villagers gave *Ayyānar* the most efficient means of protection they knew of from their local chieftains, the horse and the sword."

[19] According to Kramrisch [*Unknown India: Ritual Art in Tribe and Village*, p 57]: "The terracotta steeds are offered to *Aiyanar* by the village collectively or by individual devotees. Larger than real, the horses raise their fiercely noble heads, ready to carry god or demon. The potter-priest gives them basic shapes which he knows how to modify in keeping with the ardent naturalism of South Indian sculpture. He has seen the rearing horses supporting the roofs of the large halls of stone temples of the Vijayanagar style of the sixteenth century (*Madurai Vīran*)." Remarking on the effect of these terracottas as preventatives against disease, Gough [p 260] wrote: "The votive images of bullocks and horses in some of the South Indian village sanctuaries form large herds of animal statuary whose impact by sheer number of their repetetive shapes is as powerful as that of the human votive figures offered for the warding off of epidemics. They form a dam of cumulative units against apprehensions and fears."

Ayyānar shrines, however this practice has socio-religious overtones which usually relegate it to the province of 'backward classes'. *Brāhmans* and many modern educated Indians decry animal sacrifice, and many claim that it does not exist in Tamil Nadu.[20] However the results of this survey would prove otherwise. Sacrifices of chickens were documented in several *Ayyānar* shrines in South Arcot District.[21]

Many Tamils pray to *Ayyānar* for cures for sick or injured members of their families. A common form of terracotta offering to *Ayyānar* is a *thoṭṭilam pillaiyam*, or cradle child. It represents a sick child, usually seated, sometimes in a wooden cradle suspended in a tree near the god's icon. The child's parents place it there at the moment when they first implore the god to aid them (Plate 5.10). If their request is fulfilled, they will donate a horse to *Ayyānar* during the next festival. Votive terracottas are also given to *Ayyānar* for a variety of other reasons — for example, to ensure a healthy crop, to bless a difficult journey, or to prevent an unhappy separation. Sculptures of dogs (Plate 5.11) and cows are offered to guard the health of domestic animals. Clay insects and reptiles remind the god to protect his devotees' homes and

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[20] Many informants interviewed, particularly *Brāhmans*, businessmen, and academics, denied that blood sacrifices take place in *Ayyānar* shrines. Others were very condescending of the practice, infering that it was a clear example of the inferiority of the practitioners. The basic theme of a discussion among several professors at a college in Madras in 1981 was that animal sacrifice was in some way associated with 'black magic' and the worship of evil power, and that it should be outlawed in Tamil Nadu. This attitude is particularly evident in a culture which places such a premium value on vegetarianism and conservative *Brāhmanism*.

[21] E. Dhanakodi, the *pujārī* at an Ayyānar shrine in Vadakalpattu, South Arcot District, remarked: "I have been the *pujārī* in this shrine from my boyhood days and my profession is hereditary. At the time of *Oruthal* festival in *Adi* (June-July) sometimes I make offering of a rooster to this god (*Vilakattu Ayyānarappan*). At that time someone who is making *pūjā* will bring this rooster with him, along with other offerings, and as part of the *pūjā* I offer up its blood to our god. People also give many horses at this time, or else at *Therukūthu* festival which closely follows." Inglis ["Possession and Pottery: Serving the Divine in a South Indian Community", p 97] recorded the placing of fresh rooster blood on the eyes of a terracotta image to open them, thereby giving life to the image. Crooke [p 104] recorded animal sacrifices in South Arcot District in 1894. Jayakar [p 225] documented the sacrifice of a goat at an *Ayyānar* shrine in Pudukottai, Thanjavur District. Krishna [pp 62-63] records animal sacrifices to *Ayyānar*'s *Vīran* at which time a curtain is placed in front of the image of *Ayyānar* so that he might not witness this 'debasing' spectacle. That custom was not observed in this present study.

crops from these pests, while terracotta fish may signal a fisherman's desire for a better catch. Human figures often represent primary donors to the shrine, or people who desire particular recognition in the community, such as newlyweds who want to have their marriage blessed (Plate 5.12).[22]

Although terracottas today remain important to the lives of most Tamils, the livelihood of many Tamil potters is threatened by the decline in demand for their vessels, which are being replaced by such contemporary products as plastic buckets and aluminium pans.[23] Reduced sales, the lure of industrial jobs, and the rigidity of the traditional *jajmānī* system have combined to cause many sons of potters in Tamil Nadu (and elsewhere) to abandon their hereditary profession, causing the output of pottery and terracotta sculpture to shrink each year. That which remains, although still pivotal to the maintenance of indigenous culture, is beginning to change. Styles that once varied from village to village have begun to conform to a

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[22] Describing votive terracotta figures of a male and female from Puddukottai, Tamil Nadu, Jain and Aggarwala wrote [p 185]: "Figures like these, of men or *manitham*, women or *penmani* and children or *mazdalai*, are commonly offered to *Aiyanar*... These votive figures are found clustered in sanctuaries, usually in the forest and village boundaries as well as along the inner wall of the temple of *Aiyanar*. Upon wish-fulfilment — usually for the birth of a child or the health of one's parents or spouse — the devotee promises to offer the deity such figures, made upon request by the *Velar* community of potters who also perform the priestly functions in the temple of *Aiyanar*." Commenting upon the same phenomena, Thurston [pp 191-192] stated: "When a married couple is anxious to have female offspring, they take a vow to offer figures of the seven virgins, who are represented all seated in a row. If a male or female recovers from cholera, smallpox or other severe illness, a figure of the corresponding sex is offered. A childless woman makes a vow to offer up the figure of a baby, if she brings forth offspring. Figures of animals — cattle, sheep, horse, etc. — are offered at the temple when they recover from sickness, or are recovered after they have been stolen." See also Nagaswami p 55.

[23] Inglis [Creators and Consecrators, p 174] points out that historically metal vessels were only able to be used by the rich. The increasing availability and greatly reduced cost of aluminium, stainless steel, enamelled wares, and plastics has made that assumption invalid, and traditional prohibitions against the use of non-disposable cooking and serving vessels are being disregarded by householders at every level of society in preference for utensils which are easier to use and are also associated with elitist values. Inglis also noted [ibid p 139] that less than five percent of the many potters living in the Madurai District community which he documented know how to throw a pot on a wheel, although thirty percent retain some priestly responsibilities. In Gudithangichavadi, the South Arcot village documented in detail later in this chapter, only two working potters remain where less than thirty years ago there were eight. Vaithyalinga Pathar, a local Tamil potter, remarked that much of the contemporary pottery in his *tahsil* is being made by a village of Telegu potters who have immigrated in this century from Andhra Pradesh, giving further competition to the potters of his village (although these other potters do not sculpt).

regional standard. Traditional designs increasingly incorporate elements of commercial art and influences from television and films. The sculptures of remote villages have begun to reflect concepts of the modern world — a world in which Indian terracotta production is gradually gaining popularity.[24] Terracotta exhibitions, festivals, and symposia in Indian urban centres as well as abroad draw rural craftsmen in increasing numbers.[25] While this commercial trend encourages national pride in craft traditions and bolsters the craft economy, it also threatens to cause a further standardization of styles and techniques. As a result, numerous "terracotta centres" have been established for the mass production of exportable terracottas. These sculptures now tend to be treated as durable works of art rather than as the ephemeral embodiments of Divine Spirit.

Palaniappan, a rural Tamil potter, exemplifies this contemporary change. Twelve years ago, under the sponsorship of the All India Handicraft Board, a Central Government organization of craft patronage, he travelled to Bangalore, capital of Karnataka, to study improved techniques for terracotta production and firing. The results of his education are evident in his work:

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[24] The styles of sculptures in *Ayyānar* shrines are increasingly influenced by calendar art, cinema, television, and advertising. As villagers are exposed more to public media and, through the expanding availability of affordable mass-transportation, to urban concepts and styles, many express the desire to 'modernize' the images of their deities and votive sculptures, as one villager stated: "to make our village less backward, to be more a part of modern India". Many shrines exhibit a stark difference between the forms of the stucco and terracotta sculptures remaining from earlier this century and those being sculpted today. In Plate 5.13, a clear example of this adaptation, stucco images of *Ayyānar* and his two consorts more resemble comic heroes and the Statue of Liberty than traditional representations of these deities. Inglis [ibid. p 255] notes that patrons today are more concerned with preserving existing shrines, building structures to house images which previously would have been chronically replaced with new images, or commissioning permanent stucco images to replace ones which traditionally were terracotta.

[25] Examples are the Crafts Council of India's *'Kumbha'*, a workshop-cum-exhibition on Indian terracotta and village pottery in Madras in 1981; *'Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay'*, a huge exhibition-cum workshop of Indian terracotta at the National Crafts Museum in New Delhi from 1983-1985, which traveled to San Diego, California, in 1986; the workshop-exhibitions of Indian craftsmen at the National Crafts Museum, New Delhi, which has monthly changed its roster of participating craftsmen from all over India for the last seven years; the Surajkund Crafts Melā near Delhi which annually brings hundreds of craftsmen to display their production techniques and wares; and the Festivals of India in London (1982), the U.S.A (1985-86), France (1986), the U.S.S.R. (1987), and Japan (1987).

Unlike most Tamil sculptors, he uses a permanent brick updraught kiln to fire his sculptures at higher, uniform temperatures with more durable results, and their sculptural style is a subtle blend of his heritage and that of other states. In an average year, he sculpts on commission (among other figures) thirty large horses, each composed of eight separately fired modular elements. Descended from many generations of potter-priests, Palaniappan continues the tradition of being an intermediary with the gods, placing the horses in *Ayyānar*'s shrines and facilitating communication between supplicants and deity; but commercial demands for his products and for demonstrations of his craft techniques have profoundly influenced his life. In response to a new vogue for museum exhibits of working craftsmen, Palaniappan has travelled to Madras, Delhi, Calcutta, Bombay, and other Indian cities. He also exhibited in London in 1982; Washington, D.C. (Plate 5.14), in 1985; the Soviet Union, and Japan, in 1987; and Syracuse, New York, in 1990.[26] This extensive exposure to other cultures and craftsmen has altered the style and substance of his sculptures.[27] For example, in India each terracotta would be brightly painted to proclaim its presence to the gods, but Western aesthetics have dictated that these sculptures be left unpainted. When Palaniappan returns to his remote village in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, he brings

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[26] Palaniappan has been the focus of several publications: Shah *Form and Forms of Mother Clay* pp 58-60, 115, & 174; Beaudry, Kenoyer, and Wright. "Traditional Potters in India" pp 55-63; Rinzler "Background on Aiyanar Giant Horse Sculptures of South India" pp 1-4; and Huyler "Gifts of Earth" pp 34-36, and one documentary film: *The Sacred Horses of Tamil Nadu*, written and directed by John Kea, BBC, 1982.

[27] Rinzler [p 4] noted: "Beside filling festival orders, Palaniappan also makes sculptures for the All India Handicrafts Board, for sale and show at exhibitions introducing new designs in crafts. When people see his work he receives orders from as far away as Delhi, Bangalore and Calcutta. Through these exhibitions, Palaniappan has been influenced by new designs and museum pieces to develop and improve his work. Palaniappan explains that his designs are a little different from his father's slightly more exaggerated folk style. His features are a little more naturalistic and easy, without the staring eyes and the arched neck, and his decorations are also a little different."

innovations, adaptations to a modern world that is beginning to affect the production and purpose of all Indian votive terracottas.

Having established a general identification of Ayyānar and his worship in Tamil Nadu and a brief survey of the terracottas used in rituals dedicated to him, the remainder of this chapter focuses upon a case study of a previously unrecognized potter in a remote Tamil village. Until he died in 1983, Vaithyalinga Pathar lived in the small village of Gudithangichavadi in South Arcot District, 209 kilometres south of Madras (Plate 5.15).[28] When interviewed, he was in his early seventies. Married at twenty-five to a girl of sixteen, who was later known simply as Amma (Mother)[29] (see Plate 1.2), the couple had three children — two sons and a daughter — two of whom had died by the time of these interviews. The remaining son lived 129 kilometres away and worked not in his hereditary role as a potter but rather as a lineman for the telephone company. Five persons now lived together (Vaithyalinga and Amma, their daughter-in-law, and her two sons) in a large brick and mud family dwelling with a tile roof supported by teak pillars and cross-beams. On either side, in terraced houses which had originally been part of the same ancestral dwelling, lived the families of Vaithyalinga's two deceased brothers.[30] Until ten years earlier, all three brothers had been engaged

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[28] Previously called Guditangichavadi Mathurai, this village had been incorporated into the nearby town of Nellikuppam in 1970, officially shortening its name at that time. It stands on the road between Panruti and Cuddalore and is about 15 miles from the ancient Pallava temple of Tiruvadigai.

[29] Although she was very generous to the author with her help and information, she would provide no other name.

[30] As is common among Tamil potters, when each of the three brothers married, they established their own kitchens and built walls to separate their portions of the house from the others'. Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators*, p 101] observed: "Each household (*kutumpam*) consists of a number of closely related people who eat from one kitchen and pool their resources. Typically this unit is small and although varying in constitution usually includes only one married couple. Thus, when married brothers share a house, they tend to set up two kitchens and divide the rooms. The same applies when a son marries. The ideal is for a son and his wife to be settled in accomodation separate from their parents." This practice of individual households for each nuclear family stands in direct contrast to the large extended households of most north Indian potters.

regularly in potterymaking and sculpting. Now Jagadesan, the nineteen-year-old son of Vaithyalinga's niece (the eldest daughter of his elder brother), was the only other male carrying on the trade (see Plate 1.14). He had not yet learned to sculpt, but his mother, Rajambal, occasionally helped Vaithyalinga in this craft. Gudithangichavadi had a population of 1,872, mostly farmers and factory workers – no upper-caste *Brāhmans* or *Kṣatriyas*. The only other craftsmen were two carpenters and a blacksmith/wheelwright. Vaithyalinga's father and both grandfathers had been potters. "There is not a time when my family were not potters," he said. "We have lived in this house for three hundred years, but before that time my ancestors lived in Chidambaram." Amma's father had been a weaver, but one of her grandfathers had been a potter. (Both of Vaithyalinga's sisters married weavers.) Although he learned his trade from his father and his uncles at an early age, Vaithyalinga did not begin working as a potter until he was forty. Before then, he farmed family lands — which, at that time, were more extensive. A series of financial disasters had forced him to sell all but one-half acre of his farmlands, but farming that remaining land was still essential for his family's livelihood.[31] Vaithyalinga spent two to three years in his apprenticeship, but he said it took him ten years working alongside his brothers to learn his trade fully.

Vaithyalinga's potting wheel always stood on the front verandah of the house at the edge of the street (see Plates 1.6 & 1.8).[32] An open area behind

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[31] Vaithyalinga commented; "Due to family circumstances, I have practically disposed of all my farmlands. Still, as *pujārī* for the village *Ayyānar* shrine I have the right to farm to temple lands." Regarding the *Velar* of Madurai District, Inglis [ibid. p 158] wrote: "the major form of compensation to the *Velar* for all their services is in rights to produce from temple lands. The temple lands (*maniyam*) are agricultural fields and groves of trees, ponds, and sometimes even small businesses, permanently set aside for the maintenance of the temple and its activities. The traditional sources of these lands are ancient grants from kings or chiefs, although the gifts or parcels of land to temples from wealthy landowners continues even today. ...The word used by *Velar* for rights to cultivation or produce from temple lands is *kaniyatci* or right to tenancy."

[32] In most *Kulalar* (potters] houses the wheel is similarly set either in front of or at the rear of the house on a verandah or under an awning. The potting area is rarely situated away

the house contained his mound of raw clay, stacks of fuel, and drying vessels and sculptures; this was also where his temporary kilns were built. The house contained two small bedrooms at the front, a very large central room in which much of the family's indoor activity occurred (Plate 5.16), a kitchen, and a storage room. Pots were stacked in every available space: in corners, under beds, alongside pillars. In the centre of the main wall of the large room was a niche enclosed by wooden doors — the *koil viṭu*, or house shrine. Inside the shrine were brass images of the family deities, *Śivaliṅga*, *Śivakāmi Amman*, *Murugan*, and *Gaṇeśa* — all surrounded by posters of the gods and framed photographs of the family *guru*, Vaithyalinga's parents, and his dead son. He commented, "I start my day's work after my regular meditation. Our family deity is *Śivakāmi Amman*. During the Tamil month of *Thai* [January-February] we celebrate the special *pūjā* [worship] for her by offering *mavilakku* [a lamp made of flour mixed with brown sugar and containing a lighted wick burning in clarified butter]. We also conduct the *Karagam* festival along with this *pūjā*. *Karagam* consists of devotees dancing with decorated pots on their heads and many garlands on them." Once each year, Vaithyalinga walked barefoot and unharmed across the red hot embers of a *pūkkuḷi* (coal pit) to prove the strength of his devotion to his gods[33], while on

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from the main dwelling, as it is in other areas of India. During the two long monsoons (summer and winter) the wheel is moved inside the house, generally into a large central room, such as that in Vaithyalinga's house.

[33] The *pūkkuḷi* is a pit 6.1 metres (20 feet) long and 900 mm (3 feet) wide filled with a bed of coals which is lighted and burned for an entire day prior to the nighttime ritual. After a period of fasting and prayer to *Śiva*, *Śivakāmi Amman*, *Murugan*, and *Ayyānar* for several days, Vaithyalinga would lead the ritual by being the first to walk slowly across the coals. Through his piety and the 'miracle' of his unsinged feet, he inspired other villagers, particularly young men, to also walk the pit, and reestablished his position as a deserving spokesman for the gods. Inglis ["Possession and Pottery: Serving the Divine in a South Indian Community", p 91] wrote: "The ascetic feats performed by the *Velar cāmiyāṭī* (priests), such as walking on hot coals (*pūkkuḷi iṟunkutal*), attest to the power of the deity to protect the *cāmiyāṭī* from pain and injury." Archana [p 21] commented: "Fire-walking festivals are held to propitiate the Goddess. Ironically they are referred to as *pookulu* festivals (walking on a bed of flowers) indicative of an inherent desire for relief from the unbearable heat. ...The sighting of a kite (*Garuda*) is considered auspicious as it indicates good rainfall. A trench, 26 feet long and 2 feet deep, is dug and lined with firewood. When

three special occasions (*Poṅgal, Saraswatī Pūjā*, and *Navarātri*), he led his family in ceremonies to worship and honour their potting and sculpting tools.[34]

Vaithyalinga's activities were divided among throwing pots, sculpting, firing, farming, and devotional and priestly duties. Potterymaking was his main occupation, although, as he said, "Due to the advent of other utensils made in plastic, German silver, etcetera, the demand for pottery has decreased over the years." With the help of his family, he usually managed only two kiln firings of pottery each month, with a capacity each time of one hundred fifty to three hundred pieces. Half of the pots from each firing were given as part of the *jajmānī* system to other villagers in exchange for food or necessary craft products; for example, at the time of a local wedding, Vaithyalinga was expected to supply the family with thirty-two different types of pots.[35] His niece, Rajambal, took the rest of the kiln products to sell in the weekly market. She remarked, "Every time the kiln is opened we take one half of the quantity for sale. This is because we are not supposed to take the entire quantity without cash payment." At the time of these interviews, a

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the *Garuda* is sighted the fire is lit. People sprinkle the fire with salt, pepper, butter and ghee. It is believed that if the salt rubbed on the bodies of those suffering from boils is thrown into the fire, they will get relief. As the flames turn into hot embers the fire-walkers take a purifying dip in water and with neem leaves tied to their waists and held in their hands run across the fire-bed to the sound of '*Aho Ayyaho*'"

[34] Vaithyalinga said "Our tools are sacred to us, our gods have given us a gift to make these pots and figures, and we must give *pūjā* to them regularly. I make a small *pūjā* every day; but on special days such as *Poṅgal*, my whole family joins to make offerings of food and flowers to our tools and to the gods who have given them to us. By honouring our wheel, paddle, anvil, and other tools, we hope that they will help us in the coming year to still make good items."

[35] Inglis [Creators and Consecrators, pp 142-143] wrote: "Our review of the history of craftsmanship and of references to craftsmen in South India provided evidence that potters were often included in the traditional lists of 'village servants', those castes most directly involved in the *jajmani*-like system. They have been linked to the 'right' division of South Indian castes, which historically identify with rural territory and are economically dependent on the productivity of the soil." Inglis observes that *jajmani* relations for potters are rapidly becoming more limited or even dissolved in some areas, and that potters are forced to augment their traditional means of income with that from other sources. This observation concurs with the Vaithyalinga data which recorded that half of that potter's pottery production was sold for cash.

pot measuring 150 by 200 mm (6 by 8 inches) sold for twenty paise (1.2 pence or 2 cents); one 200 by 250 mm (8 by 10 inches) sold for twenty-five paise (1.5 pence or 2.5 cents); and a large one 460 by 460 mm (18 by 18 inches) sold for fifty paise (3 pence or 5 cents). Terracotta sculptures, on the other hand, generally were produced only on commission. A horse 460 mm (18 inches) high sold for twenty rupees (£1/20p or $2), while one 790 mm (31 inches) high sold for thirty rupees (£1/80p or $3). In order to supplement the family's meagre income, Vaithyalinga's daughter-in-law made and sold *iddlies* and *dosais* (rice-flour cakes). In 1980, the combined average monthly income for the entire family was one hundred fifty rupees (£8/85p or $15).[36] Vaithyalinga commented, "If the intake is good, we certainly find satisfaction in our work. If the business is not good, we find it difficult to repay our loans. Usually our business is very dull during the rainy season. During the rest of the year, our business will be better. The demand starts to pick up in the month of *Thai.* In spite of all the hardships we face, we stick to this industry, as we cannot switch over to any other line." Vaithyalinga's income was also supplemented by the seasonal farming of rice, sugarcane, *ragi* (an edible red grain), and vegetables — and as often as possible by money sent by his son. In addition, he received food, cloth, and occasional money for his services as *vāttiyār* (priest) to local shrines.[37] Strict vegetarians, the family subsisted primarily on rice and *iddlies* topped by *rasam*, *sambar*, and other simple, highly spiced vegetable curries.[38]

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[36] This was a very low income even in 1980. By 1990, the high rate of inflation would cause a potter working in similarly impoverished conditions to make approximately eight hundred rupees (£26/66p or $44.44) per month. The exchange is based upon 1980 rates.

[37] "The *vattiyar* is paid for his services by the families or lineages of the subcaste for whom the rituals are performed. Payments are not fixed but vary with the length and complexity of the service and the affluence of the sponsor. ...Ritual payments to the *vattiyar* includes coins placed in the bottom of pots of holy water (*kumpakanikai*), towels (*tuni*), or body cloths (*veti*) all of which are common payments to ritual specialists in South India [ibid. p 87]."

[38] The *Velar* documented by Inglis were meat eaters [ibid p 282].

The demand for terracotta sculpture was sporadic and seasonal: Most sculptures in Tamil Nadu are given to the gods during festivals in the spring and summer. A local villager who wished to beseech *Ayyānar* for a specific boon would come to Vaithyalinga to request his intercession. Together they would visit *Ayyānar*'s shrine at the edge of the village, where Vaithyalinga would conduct the *pūjā* and both would pray to the god. The potter regularly officiated at and supplied terracottas to six different *Ayyānar* shrines in his vicinity, although some of the shrines only required his services once or twice a year (Plate 5.17).[39] Vaithyalinga said, "We worship *Ayyānar* by offering milk, curd [yoghurt], *ginguli* oil, peanut oil, *bathi*, camphor oil, sandalwood powder, dried coconut, green coconut, and five varieties of available fruits. The image of *Ayyānar* is given *abhiśekhan* [a ceremonial bath] and finally the camphor is lighted and the *aradhana* [supplication] done." Vaithyalinga might instruct the devotee to place in the shrine a terracotta gift as well, perhaps a *thoṭṭilam piḷḷaiyam* (Plate 5.18), which he would provide. In his village, six or eight of these cradle children were given to *Ayyānar* every year. He said, "Orders for *thoṭṭilam piḷḷaiyam* are given to me by *Ayyānar* devotees for offering to *Ayyānar* for the well-being of anyone in their family." If the worshipper's wish were granted, then he would be expected to present the god with a *kūthukūthurai* (terracotta horse for *Vīran*) during *Ayyānar*'s annual summer festival.

Once a year, Vaithyalinga and other family members would excavate four cartloads of clay from a pit one kilometre away and deposit it in a mound

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39 Those shrines were in Gudithangichavadi, Nellikuppam, Elumedu, Vaidipakkam, Cholavalli, and Valupattu. Vaithyalinga also conducted many of the rituals associated with *karumathi*, the eleven sacred days folowing a death. For each *karumathi* he sculpted in clay a *Śivaliṅga*, a *risabam* (bull) and eight *pardesis* (lotuses). In his village *Brāhmans* took no part in these ceremonies; all the rituals were performed by Vaithyalinga and the *madathais* (non-*Brāhman* priests) from the local temple.

behind the house (Plate 5.19).[40] The process of sculpting, firing, and decorating a *kūthukūthurai* horse would take anywhere from two weeks to a month, depending upon climatic conditions and the potter's other workload. A description of the production of a typical terracotta horse follows (Plates 5.20 through 5.45).[41]

Vaithyalinga explained, "Before starting work, I do a small *pūjā* to Lord *Murugan* and meditate for about ten minutes every morning." He would first light a stick of *agarbatti* (incense), close his eyes for a few seconds' meditation, and *pranam* to the clay and to his tools. To create the resilient consistency needed to support the figure, the potter mixed water with one part rice husks and three parts clay, aided by Amma, who brought him the chaff (Plate 5.20).[42] He said: "The consistency should be soft and pasty; but at the same time, it should be strong enough to support the shape of the figure being sculpted." After kneading the clay to remove stones, sticks, any irregularities, and all air bubbles, he moulded on the ground four 300 mm (12 inch) square slabs, each 10 mm (3/8 inch) thick (Plate 5.21). After allowing them to dry for a few hours, he wrapped each one successively around a 125 mm (5 inch) diameter *mavul kattai* (wooden dowel), first covering the dowel with ash to

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[40] Vaithyalinga remarked, "I get my clay from about one-half mile from my house from a place near the main road. My father and my grandfather also dug their clay there. ...No, there is no secret about where it is, everyone here knows it. ...I get it during the summer season. If we get clay during winter it would be very difficult for us to prepare it ready for work (ie. it would be too wet)."

[41] The following description documents the construction and firing of a *kūthukūthurai* horse specially commissioned for this thesis. The potter was given no instructions or advice as to the size, form, or decoration of the figure, although he freqently asked for such advice. Also commissioned, but not documented in this thesis, were a *thoṭṭilam pillaiyam* and a sculpture of *Ayyānar*. He was asked to describe his sculpting process in his own words as he went along, recorded on a microcassette for later translation in Madras by Shiva Kumar. By nature, interaction with a foreign researcher had an effect upon Vaithyalinga's life and products. Although every care was given to not influence his work, the sculptures commissioned were different and more 'modern' in style than those images previously sculpted by the potter and still standing in nearby shrines.

[42] Inglis [ibid. p 229] noted that the *Velar* sculptors mixed with new clay a handful of dirt composed of the remains of previous images and taken from the floor of the shrine to which the new image would be dedicated. Vaithyalinga did not observe this custom.

keep the clay from sticking (Plate 5.22). Then he joined the seams into a cylinder. After removing the dowel, he stood all four cylinders upright upon an ash-dusted wooden plank and let them dry. Because each new section had to be dry enough to support the next addition, the process of sculpting was slow. But Vaithyalinga never wasted time. When completing work on each stage of the horse, he would prepare clay, work on other sculptures, or throw vessels on his wheel. On the second day, he gradually added ropes or coils of clay to each cylinder to lengthen and widen their tops. By the third day, the upper circumference of each leg was wide enough to become the flanks of the horse (Plate 5.23). "I am now joining the rear legs. I have finished all the front and rear legs. I have to allow these to dry before I join all four together. It will take one hour to dry." To these legs more ropes of clay were added, flattened, and smoothed to build up the horse's body. Vaithyalinga explained, "For strengthening the upper portions of the legs, I am using a mallet (*pālikai*) and anvil (*taṭṭukal*). I hold the anvil inside with one hand and beat the clay against the stone with a mallet that I hold in the other hand. I have now joined the legs thereby forming part of the belly of the horse. I have left a hole about 50 mm [2 inches] in diameter at the centre of the belly portion for the purpose of proper heating of the inside in the kiln (Plates 5.24, 5.25, & 5.26)."

By the fourth day, the sides were strong enough to allow the back to be bridged over and the neck to be constructed slowly (Plates 5.27 & 5.28). In any large hollow clay sculpture, proper drying is critical to tensile strength in order to prevent the collapse of unsupported sections. Vaithyalinga had decided to sculpt this horse with *Vīran* riding on its back. The choice of whether or not to depict the *kūthukūthurai* with a rider is decided between the sculptor and his patron. He commented, "To place the horse at the *Ayyānar* shrine with or without the rider depends upon the wishes of the

devotee. Also devotees strongly believe that *Vīran* goes around the village on his horse protecting the village." Vaithyalinga regularly employed both styles. On the fifth day, while waiting for the existing sculpture to be sufficiently dry, he began to add *Vīran*'s bent legs and the first of several *mālās* (garlands) to the horse's neck, aided in this process by his niece, Rajambal (Plates 5.29 & 5.30).[43] The sixth day saw the formation of the rider's trunk up to his middle torso and the beginning of the top portion of the horse's neck. The potter said, "There are no specific measurements. I do every figure as it shapes to my taste and I have only the overall height in my mind as the guiding factor. For example now the clay that I had put on the trunk portion has become excessive and I am removing excess clay." During the seventh and eighth days, Vaithyalinga finished *Vīran*'s torso and the horse's neck and began to work on the most difficult step: the horse's head. Since the head dropped to an angle of about forty-five degrees from the front legs, it had to be supported temporarily with sticks until it had dried enough to carry its own weight. He added a slab of clay protruding from the horse's neck at a downward angle (Plate 5.31), placing sticks from the horse's chest to support this jaw, and then gingerly added ropes of clay to this slab in joined arches to create the nose and head. The process, painstakingly slow, required many adjustments. Vaithyalinga commented, "After I started learning to make figures, it took me four years to make them to my satisfaction." On the ninth day, for the first time he used materials other than the chaff-and-sand-strengthened clay. The horse's head was strong enough to begin adding the ears. He said, "I am now doing ears for the horse as the base portion where they attach is still damp. I am using straw to support them, wrapping clay around the straw to create ears." Next

[43] Rajambal remarked, "I cannot sculpt large images like this by myself, I can only make smaller ones. But I can help in some decorations on the large pieces."

he began sculpting the rider's arms and head, constructing an interior armature of sticks to support the shoulders and arms and a core of straw for the head before he covered it all with a thick layer of clay (Plates 5.32 & 5.33). "With these sticks and straw," Vaithyalinga said, "the head will not become weak. As the clay becomes completely hard in the kiln, the head will remain strong. ... I am now adding some fine sand to the clay. The added sand will help to avoid cracks in the final figure."

On the tenth day, he transformed the amorphous lump of clay at the top into the face of *Vīran* (Plate 5.34). This was the moment when the figure began to gain its character, to have a presence and the potter's pleasure in the sculpting process noticeably increased. When with his thumbs he gave the *Vīran* his eye indentations and nose (Plate 5.35), Vaithyalinga said, "My mind thinks, my eyes see, my hands perform. Sometimes when I don't get the exact shape, I set it right by adding or removing clay." He spent the next day finishing the eyes, mouth, and nostrils of the horse's head (Plate 5.36), intricately modeling a mane and more garlands, and crowning the head with an *annapakśi* (a small bird) between its ears. "*Annapakśi* is only meant for decoration. We continue the line of the mane so that it flows into the tail portion of the *annapakśi* and hence this bird lends to the beauty of the horse. Whether to sculpt the *annapakśi* or not depends upon the person who makes the horse." For this finishwork he used a finer clay taken from a riverbed and mixed with well-sifted rice chaff. On the twelfth and final day of sculpting, Vaithyalinga added details to *Vīran*'s head and torso (a large moustache, an elaborate helmet with ear decorations, and epaulets, bracelets, and necklaces), completing the image of a ferocious equestrian soldier (Plate 5.37). He remarked, "I am now working on *Vīran*'s eyes. For shaping the eyeball I am using the open end of a bottle. I am now working on the eyes of the

annapakśi. As I am finishing the work on the bird's eyes, the horse and rider will be ready for placing in the kiln." On the thirteenth day, the elaborate sculpture was left alone to dry before its final day of firing (Plate 5.38).

Traditional potters in Tamil Nadu employ only temporary kilns; the permanent types used farther north were never popular here.[44] In preparation for firing his sculpture of the *Vīran*, on the fourteenth day Vaithyalinga spread out various fuels on the ground behind his house. With them and the horse were all the other items to be fired that day: forty-five pots, six clay stoves, approximately seventy *avut* (clay cones to hold fireworks for the upcoming *Therukūthu* festival), a sculpture of *Ayyānar*, and one of a *thoṭṭilam piḷḷaiyam*. The potter commented, "This morning I collected dried coconut shells, palm leaves, straw, sticks, casuarina wood, and cow dung cakes and prepared the ground for the kiln. After putting in the *Ayyānar* figure, the *thoṭṭilam piḷḷaiyam*, the *kūthukūthurai*, and a few other items, I made arrangements for lighting up the kiln (*cūḷai*)." Assisting in the process of preparing the kiln were Amma, their daughter-in-law, Rajambal, and seven other neighbourhood women. Amma spent several hours that morning standing barefoot in a small backyard mudhole, adding water, kneading the mud with her feet, and stooping down to pick out any unwanted pebbles and sticks (Plate 5.39). Meanwhile, after the figures were warmed in the sun most of the morning, they were placed slightly apart from each other on a flat, clean area. A small dung fire was started nearby. At 12:31 p.m., the coals from this fire were divided, put into several unfired pots, and set by the women around and between the figures. Vaithyalinga then quickly added some coconut husks and sticks before he, Rajambal, and the other women (except for Amma) began to arrange the remaining pots upside-down between, against, and

[44] The updraught brick kiln used by Palaniappan, described earlier, is a rare exception.

around the figures, carefully and gradually building them up into a rough dome (Plates 5.40 & 5.41). All the spaces between these pots and the sculptures were filled rapidly with more coconut husks, sticks, cow dung, and the clay firework cones (Plates 5.42). Next the entire dome was layered quickly: first with palm leaves, then with straw, and finally with a smooth layer of mud (Plate 5.43). The mud layer required impressive teamwork: The neighbourhood women relayed pots filled with mud in a brigade stretched between Amma, still in the mudhole, and Vaithyalinga at the kiln. In completing the kiln, the potter provided sufficient ventilation by leaving, in the centre of the dome, a hole 380 mm (15 inches) in diameter and, at the base, an uncovered ring of straw 230 mm (9 inches) high. (Vaithyalinga only fires oxidized pottery and sculpture; he never employs reduction firing.) Then, at 12:50 p.m., he lighted the kiln at both of these spots (Plate 5.44), saying, "Even if the weather becomes cloudy after lighting the kiln, no harm shall be done; but if it rains, the whole affair will be a total loss. Everything inside will go to pieces." At 1:15 p.m., he quickly wove palm leaves together to make an improvised screen in order to block the southern wind. As cracks began to appear on the south side of the kiln, he added more mud and palm leaves to that section.

Five days earlier, it had rained, but this time the firing was successful. At 3:10 p.m., Vaithyalinga carefully began to pull off the dried mud layer: "What I am using is an iron rod. I am removing the mud to allow sufficient air passage for proper burning of the kiln." After a few more minutes, he said, "I am now opening the kiln quickly as the heat is rather too much and this might spoil the horse figure and others." Gingerly reaching into the kiln with an iron-tipped rod, Vaithyalinga lifted out the top pots and placed them to one side of the kiln. The removal process was slow in order to prevent a quick rush of cool

air from cracking the red-hot terracottas. As the potter transferred the fired pots to the ground, Amma and Rajambal tested them by striking each one with a fingernail and listening to its resonance. (A cracked vessel would not resonate.) Gradually *Vīran*'s head, shoulders, and torso, and the head of his horse emerged intact — now red, rather than the previously unfired grey (Plate 5.45). At 3:40 p.m., Vaithyalinga removed the last of the pots around the horse's feet and the two smaller figures. The entire firing had taken less than three hours.

The terracotta horse and the other sculptures were kept inside the potter's house until such time as they were needed for donation to a shrine. A commission for a horse usually would be received at least a month or two before the festival for which it was needed. If a horse was required for a shrine in another village, a messenger would be sent to Vaithyalinga's house with the order, accompanied by a small gift of food and clothing. In an average year, Vaithyalinga was commissioned to sculpt six to eight of these horses. The potter commented, "The demand for *Ayyānar* horses has increased over the years. Every year during the festival season for the *Ayyānar* shrine (June-July) we sell a larger number of *Ayyānar* horses." The demand for Vaithyalinga's terracotta sculptures was not typical of other potters in the district. A. Subramaniya Pathar, a potter of Panruti, a large nearby town, remarked, "The demand has reduced considerably over the years. Ten years ago, worshipping was more intense and, consequently, more devotees were offering horse images. In those days I used to sell fifty horses each year. Now I sell thirty horses per year."

The figure that Vaithyalinga had just completed stood 860 mm (34 inches) high, an average size for one of his horses. Stating that the largest terracotta he had ever made was approximately 1.8 metres (6 feet) high, he

added, "The demand for quality of work has certainly come down when compared to my grandfather's days. The customers do not attach that much importance to the quality of work as in earlier years. Interest in art has come down." On another ocassion he said, "As these terracotta figures are mainly meant for offering to *Ayyānar* shrines by the devotees, not much importance is placed upon quality. Whatever I create is accepted." This change in attitude and demand certainly was evident in the two huge terracotta horses and single elephant still standing in the *Ayyānar* shrine in Semakottai, approximately forty kilometres away (Plates 5.46 & 5.47). Superbly sculpted by Vaithyalinga's great-grandfather sometime in the late nineteenth century, they tower more than five metres (16 feet) high.[45] Each sculpture was constructed in a manner similar to that of Vaithyalinga's smaller horse. Large slabs and coils of clay were first shaped by hand and then beaten with mallet and anvil into walls 75 to 150 mm (3 to 6 inches) thick. After the elaborate decorative details were added, each of these gigantic hollow vehicles for *Vīran* was fired in a temporary kiln erected around it on the site where it still stands. Vaithyalinga commented that neither he nor his brothers had been taught to sculpt such large figures, and he was unaware of any potter capable of the feat. Although a few Tamil potters still continue to produce monumental terracotta horses upon rare commission[46], they appear incapable of sculpting figures as large as those standing in Semakottai.[47]

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[45] No record has been discovered of any other terracotta sculptures, prehistoric, historic, or contemporary, as large as these and other comparable Tamil figures. Statements have been made refering to some Tamil terracottas as high as 7.5 metres (25 feet), but that claim is unsubstantiated and in this survey over twenty years, none of that size has been found.
[46] The entire process of constructing and firing a 2.7-metre-high (nine-foot-high) terracotta horse was documented in Puttur, near Chidambaram, South Arcot District (approximately 120 kilometres from Semakottai) by Ron Dubois and Stephen Inglis in 1981 and published as: Dubois "The Aiyanar Horse". Photographs of that process appeared in Inglis "The Craft of the Velar", pp 17-18. The procedure required twenty days work by four potters for a commissioned sum of 500 rupees (ē29 or $50]. Dubois also released a film documenting the production entitled *The Working Processes of the Potters of India: Massive Terra-cotta*

Throughout the year, Tamil Nadu has many festivals in which votive terracotta sculptures are given in worship. In South Arcot District, the two deities that most frequently require these gifts are *Ayyānar* and *Mārīamman* [48]. *Therukūthu*, the primary festival focused on the worship of *Ayyānar*, may take place any time in the summer months between *Parguni* and *Ani* (mid-March to mid-July).[49] The dates are fixed each year in consultation with priests, astrologers, and village elders.[50] Itinerant troupes of actors and musicians vie with each other for the honour of performing during *Therukūthu*. Ten days are filled with raucous and colourful musical dance-dramas of popular legends, particularly the *Mahābhārata* and stories of *Ayyānar* and his *Vīran*. Towns and villages are filled with special carnivals and markets, everyone dresses in their finest clothes, and all take part in the celebrations.[51]

Therukūthu is an especially important occasion for the *vāttiyār*, or potter-priest. Vaithyalinga Pathar was the *vāttiyār* for his village of Gudithangichavadi and for several nearby villages. A neighbour remarked, "In

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Horse Construction [Oklahoma State University]. See also Inglis *Creators and Consecrators*, pp 267-271.

[47] The single recorded contemporary commission of a gigantic terracotta figure, sixteen feet high, ended in disaster [BBC documentary film: *The Sacred Horses of Tamil Nadu*, written and directed by John Kea, 1982]. The potters had sculpted horses comparable in size to the one documented by Dubois, but none had ever attempted one of greater proportions. Lack of correct technology caused the horse to collapse during firing.

[48] Although sometimes *Mārīamman*'s shrines contain terracotta images of the goddess, or those of the *Sapta-Mātrika* (the seven Mother Goddesses, of whom *Mārīamman* is one), the most frequent terracottas given to her are *thoṭṭilam piḷḷaiyam* as part of requests that she cure diseased devotees (see Chapter Three, footnote 9, and Plate 5.48). Vaithyalinga noted that at *Mariamma*'s seven day summer festival usually seven to eight devotees from Gudithangichavadi offered her *thoṭṭilam piḷḷaiyam*.

[49] Photography was not permitted at this festival and, consequently, all remaining plates depict sites photographed at another time.

[50] Vaithyalinga commented "Every year the organizers of the *Therukūthu* festival collect money from all the villagers for conducting the festival. Unfortunately during certain years the money collected is misused resulting in cancellation of the entire festival."

[51] Rinzler pp 3-4. A thorough account of the *Therukūthu* festival in North Arcot District, especially focused upon descriptions of its individual form of folk theatre, may be found in Devika pp 60-68. As part of the festival there, the villagers construct a twelve metre (forty foot) long mud image of the warrior *Duryodhana* upon the ground, around which much of the drama takes place.

this village only this Pathar and Jagadesan Pathar [his grand-nephew] make pottery. In spite of their profession and their placement in society, these two families enjoy a certain amount of respectability in the village. Vaithyalinga Pathar, who has studied such Tamil classics as *Kamba Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, is considered a scholarly person. People in the village consult him on various matters pertaining to dreams, bad omens, ill health, domestic problems, village life, and so on. He and his wife are invited for all weddings in the village and they participate in all the social functions and festivals."[52]

Vaithyalinga began to prepare himself days in advance of each festival in which he acted as *vāttiyār*.[53] He slept on the floor (rather than, as usual, upon a bed) and alternated fasting with eating only selected 'pure' foods. He bathed twice each day, dressed in clean, unstitched clothes, and, avoiding the women in his family, spent as much time as possible by himself praying and

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[52] Describing the position of the *vāttiyār* among the *Velar* potters, Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators*, pp 83-84] wrote: "The responsibility for the ritual supervision of *Velar* participation in both the festivals and for conducting all major subcaste level rituals lies with the subcaste priest or *vattiyar*. This specialist prepares and administers the crucial rituals which mark stages of infancy and youth, puberty, marriage and death. ...The term *vattiyar* is commonly used today to mean 'teacher', and more specifically school teacher, but also has wider connotations of 'learned person' which are appropriated to the position under consideration. The *Velar* consider the most outstanding skill of the *vattiyar* to be his ability to recite *Sanskrit* verses (slokas) which accompany various life cycle rituals. It is apparent that his knowledge of the correct procedure for complex life cycle rites, which are often performed amid a frenzy of interruptions, arguments and excitement, is every bit as essential." Inglis goes on [ibid. pp 84-87] to describe the apprenticeship and later duties of the *Velar vāttiyār*. He also notes [ibid. pp 283-285 and "Possession and Pottery: Serving the Divine in a South Indian Community", pp 91-95] another role of the *Velar* priest as *cāmiyāṭī* (literally translated as 'god-dancer'), which encompasses his position as medium who in ecstatic trance states communicates directly the words of the deity to the devotee. Although neither Vaithyalinga nor the people of his village or environs used the word *cāmiyāṭī*, it would in essence also apply to his similar role as spokesman for the gods. The terms regularly used for Vaithyalinga were *pujārī* or *vāttiyār*. As will be seen, he was regularly possessed in trance by the gods; he felt that he was taken over by their spirits to advise and counsel the participants of special *pūjās*.

[53] The previous account of Vaithyalinga Pathar and his activities is taken directly from personal observations gathered over a three-year period (1980 to 1983). The author was planning to attend a *Therukūthu* festival with Vaithyalinga when the potter died in 1983, and that trip was cancelled. The description of the festival and dedication of terracottas to *Ayyānar* is compiled from interviews with Vaithyalinga and others, observations of other Tamil festivals, and the research and writings of Stephen Inglis concerning the *Velar* of Madurai District [*Creators and Consecrators: A Potter Community of South India*, "Possession and Pottery: Serving the Divine in a South Indian Community", "Making and Breaking: Craft Communities in South Asia" and "The Craft of the Velar".]

meditating.[54] Just before the *Therukūthu* festival, he would paint the images to be presented to *Ayyānar*. The choice of colours was left to the votary, but, unlike many Tamil potters, Vaithyalinga preferred a simple palette. He commented, "I can paint my figures in any way you wish. If you like I will use bright oil paints. Some of my customers prefer this. It is considered more modern. I prefer to use the colours which I learned from my father and brothers. They are not so bright and they wear off in time." Designated sculptures (horses, cradle children, donor figures, and/or cow or dog figures, depending upon the demand) would be covered first with a slip of plain white lime. After allowing that coat to dry, he painted the figure's prominent features in the requested colours (red, blue, green, yellow, and black), using powdered, water-based paints purchased from the market and mixed with egg white, oil, and tree sap. The eyes were left to be finished later.

All night before the last day of the festival, Vaithyalinga would stay awake in solitary prayer. Early the next afternoon, the participating devotees would arrive at his house carrying offerings of flowers, food, oils, incense, and cloth to be given to the god. Vaithyalinga, dressed only in a white cotton *dhoti* (a long, wide cloth wrapped around the waist), with the *triśūla* insignia of *Śiva* marked on his forehead with white ashes, would carry the images out of his house and place them at the edge of the street in a temporary shrine constructed of sugarcane stalks and banana leaves. There, accompanied by the loud adulations of a crowd of spectators, he would paint the eyes (*kantiḷappu*) of each of the sculptures, invoking *Ayyānar* to imbue them with his spirit and bring them to life. Regarding this auspicious moment,

[54]Research among other Tamil potter-priests has indicated that in preparation for festivals, they also avoid sex and involvement with any life-cycle ceremonies, especially the pollution generated by births, menstruation, and death [Inglis "Possession and Pottery: Serving the Divine in a South Indian Community", p 91].

Vaithyalinga said, "This is most important, the painting of the eyes. Now the figure can be said to have life. Now it is a proper vehicle for the *Vīran*. Before this time it was simply a figure. It had no importance. Now it is a fitting gift for the gods."[55] On behalf of the devotees, Vaithyalinga then dressed each sculpture with new cloth, adorned it with flowers and *sindūr*, and presented it with gifts of fruit and lighted incense. After this ceremony, he placed the smaller images in baskets cushioned with straw. Bamboo palanquins supported each horse, and all were hoisted onto devotees' heads and shoulders. Moving in procession through the crowded streets, the participants were led by the festival musicians and dancers and by Vaithyalinga. As in most Indian festivals, the noise was extreme: The singing and shouting of the participants was mingled with Tamil *bhajanais* (prayers) blasted from loudspeakers, while fireworks boomed intermittently. As the parade followed the route to *Ayyānar*'s shrine at the edge of the village, ecstatic villagers reached towards the carried figures and to Vaithyalinga for blessing.

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[55] The moment when the eyes of a sculpture are finished, whether painted, chiseled, moulded, or carved, has been recorded throughout Indian history as particularly significant, e.g. *Kasyapa-Jnanakandah* 60 [Goudriaan pp 174-175] and Coomaraswamy pp 49-53. Inglis "Possession and Pottery: Serving the Divine in a South Indian Community", p 97] described the opening of eyes of a terracotta image by touching them with the bloody toe of a rooster. Regarding the painting of the eyes of a primary deity image, Inglis [*Creators and Consecrators*, pp 240-243] commented: "The eye-touching is a crucial point in the festival because, as far as the assembled crowd is concerned, it is the moment when the deity actually becomes manifest in the image. The implication is that once the deity can 'see' through the image, it can become fully present. ... The *Velar* is the only one who can consecrate the image, precisely because of the danger involved. The 'arrival' of a local deity to be honoured in a new image at a festival is a highly charged moment when the boundary between human and divine and between chaos and control becomes especially tenuous. ...The gaze of the deity as the image's eyes are opened is overpowering and could be fatal unless mediated by a specialist. ...The *Velar* absorbs the withering look of the deity and passed on the merit of the image, with deity now fully manifest and properly contained, to the landowner patrons and their village neighbours." "For the *Velar* today, the eye-touching ritual retains its economic importance as a point in the image making process when pressure can be exerted on the festival patrons if the arrangements are unsatisfactory or the correct payments have not been made. The image is unfinished and of no use until the eye-touching is complete and no one but the *Velar* can complete the image in this way. With the crowd assembled and musicians and other specialists hired, any delay is costly, embarassing, and potentially dangerous for the patrons. Knowing this, the *Velar* can refuse to perform the ritual unless accounts are settled [ibid. p 241]."

Freshly cleaned and painted with bright polychrome enamels, a huge stucco image of *Ayyānar* was seated in his shrine with his right hand raising an iron sword and his right leg crossed over his left (Plate 5.49). Surrounded by trees and guarding the rice paddies and fields of sugarcane that formed the boundaries of the village, the sculpture was intended to command respect.[56] Lined up before the trees behind the image were the broken remains of the terracotta gifts of previous years (Plate 5.50), and a large dirt pile composed of a jumble of heads and body parts of horses, gods, *Vīran, thotillam pillaiyam*, guardian figures, dogs, and countless other bits, all remnants of centuries of devotion. When the procession arrived at the shrine, the new terracottas were unloaded from the baskets and palanquins and, under Vaithyalinga's direction, placed before the god (Plate 5.51). All the gifts that had been carrried from the village were now put upon *Ayyānar*'s lap. In prayer to the god, Vaithyalinga sang out:

> "You have given us a life, you have shown us your mercy;
> We bring to you our gift;
> For the life you have given, we give you this horse;
> We are given earth; we are of earth; we return earth;
> Accept our gift."[57]

Reciting *sanskrit ślokas*, the potter-priest lighted lamps and incense and distributed *vibhūti* (sacred ash) to the worshippers. *Ayyānar*, the bestower of miracles, was praised; his many deeds recited, his generosity lauded. Children who had been cured of illness were held up in proclamation of the god's great power. Those votaries whose prayers had been answered told the stories of their miracles, and people who were cured of diseases or

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[56] Concerning *Ayyānar*'s nature, Vaithyalinga stated, "We don't find fierceness in the face of the District Collector or the District Superintendent of Police, whereas we find fierceness in the face of the Constable. Likewise, the *Veeran* is fierce, but *Ayyānar* always remains serene."

[57] This prayer was recorded at a terracotta dedication at another *Ayyānar* shrine; but when asked directly about it, Vaithyalinga confirmed that he would recite the same words during the *pūjās* at which he officated.

infirmities proclaimed their good fortune. The ceremony fulfilled their vows to the god, a sacred bond between an individual and his or her deity, the reciprocal exchange of gifts. New requests and supplications, written on slips of paper, were impaled upon the iron sword. Then, in a tremulous trance, his speaking voice altered, Vaithyalinga, as *vāttiyār*, was possessed by the spirit of *Ayyānar*. Devotees competed with each other to press their questions to him, and Vaithyalinga, on behalf of the god, answered them. Advice was requested on family matters, civil disputes, health issues, and agricultural problems. *Ayyānar*'s devotees believe that the god can see into their souls. He is considered just, but not benevolent, and some of the judgements that he passed through the potter demanded strict and arduous compliance.[58] Then, after an hour of speaking for the god, Vaithyalinga came out of his trance and the festival was over. Gathering, as his due, a portion of the fruits, grains, oils, *ghī*, confections, cloth, and money that had been given in offering, Vaithyalinga Pathar returned to his home. After eating and resting, he began again his daily production of clay vessels, resuming his life as a craftsman of mundane terracottas until he was required again to serve as a medium for the gods.

After the festival, the shrine at the edge of the village was deserted. Passersby might stop before the image of *Ayyānar* from time to time to light a stick of *agarbatti* and leave a garland of marigolds, reminders to the god of their vows, his promises, or their gratitude. Generally the shrine would be left until the next summer's *Therukūthu* festival, when again it would be the focus

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[58] Inglis wrote "The presence of the deity is felt so powerfully that to utter a lie in its presence, it is believed, brings calamity to the teller. Many of the disputes, such as proof of adultery, repudiation of loans received and other such matters, are settled even to this day in the village temple. In many interior villages, there is no need for civil or criminal courts to decide the nature of punishments. The temple of the village god, the impersonal spirit that permeates and rules the society, is sufficient to take care of the evil doers." As spokesman possessed by *Ayyānar*, Vaithyalinga acted as judge and juror of village matters.

of joy, hope and fear. The *kūthukūthurai* horses given to *Ayyānar*'s *Vīran* had already transmigrated into the spirit world; the clay shells left behind were memories of devotion (Plate 5.52). Their freshly painted surfaces would rapidly begin to fade in the summer rains, as slowly they cracked and disintegrated to join the melding layers of their countless predecessors. Their life was in the giving, the culmination of vows; once given, they returned to the earth from which they were made, to be replaced by the next year's gifts of earth.

Plate 5.1) These brightly painted horses, standing more than 1.2 metres (4 feet) high, have just been given to *Ayyānar* in his shrine at Pattiamdikampatti, Thanjavur District. They represent the largest figures generally sculpted today in Tamil Nadu.

Plate 5.2) An early twentieth century stucco image of *Ayyānar* at Vadakalpattu, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

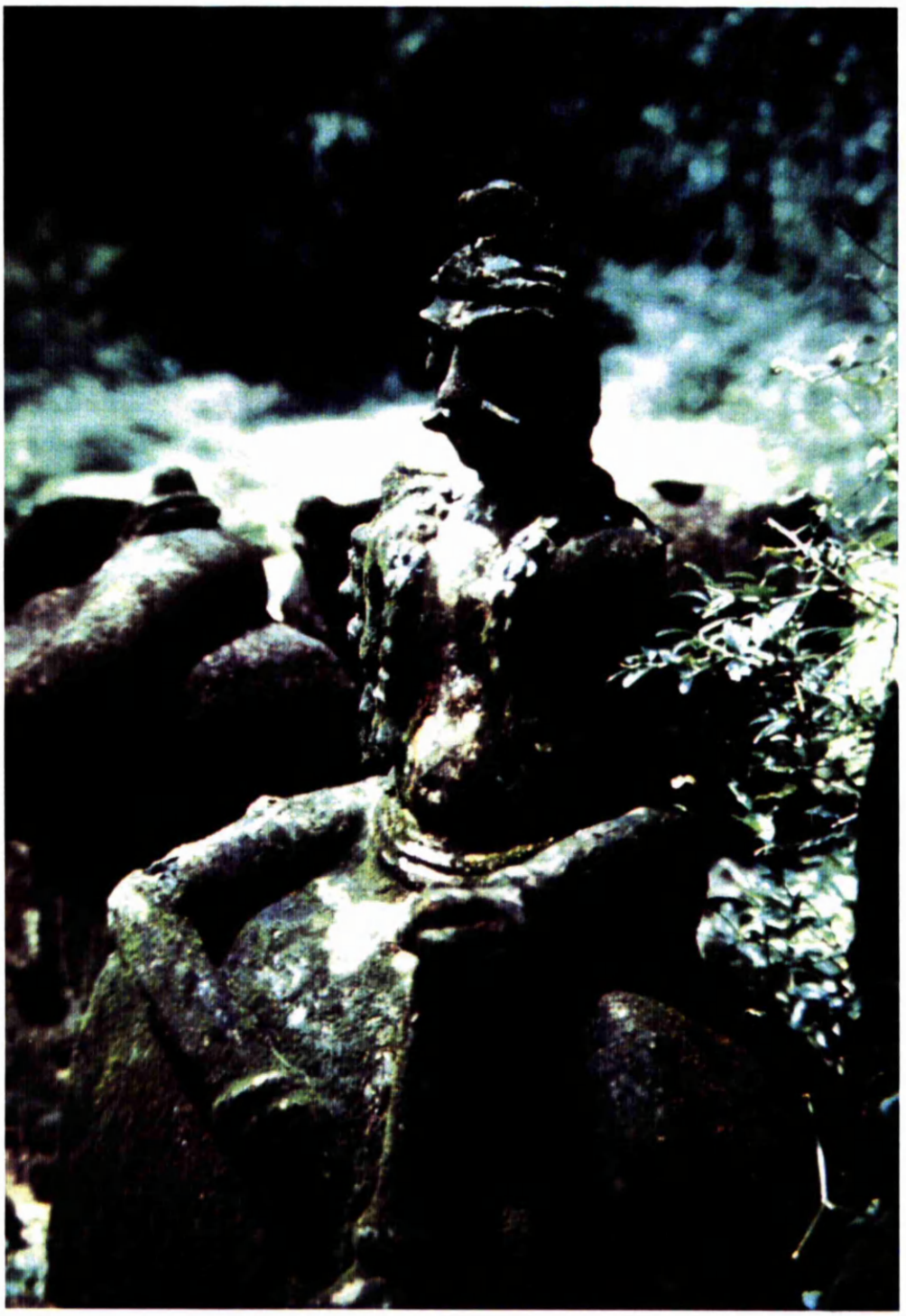

Plate 5.3) Terracotta image of *Ayyānar* one metre (40 inches) high in a shrine in Thondaimanatham, South Arcot District, Tamil Nadu.

Plate 5.4) A terracotta image of *Ayyānar* and his two consorts, *Pūraṇī* and *Puṣkalā*, stand in the centre of a shrine in Yarlandakullam, Madurai District, flanked by *Vīran* in chariot horse-drawn chariots and a wall upon which stand votive offerings cows and donors.

Plate 5.5) For their household *pūjā*, *Harijan* (outcaste) villagers too poor to afford sculpted images of the gods have made their own images of *Ayyānar* and his two consorts by forming three tiny cones of clay; their sanctity is proclaimed by dots of vermilion (Kurjipaddi, South Arcot District).

Plate 5.6) A terracotta image of *Ayyānar* stands behind offerings of horses on the furthest boundaries of the village of Konairikuppam, South Arcot District.

Plate 5.7) A late nineteenth or early twentieth century terracotta horse still standing in an *Ayyānar* shrine near Neyveli, South Arcot District, portrays more attention given to detail than most of those sculpted today.

Plate 5.8) In many shrines, such as this one in Velangambadi, South Arcot District, dozens of new horses may be installed each year.

Plate 5.9) Historically, Tamil potters have excelled in sculpting very large terracotta images, such as this three-metre-high (10 feet) horse, which has been standing for almost thirty years in an *Ayyānar* shrine in Yarlandakullam, Madurai District.

Plate 5.10) Sitting on the roof of an *Ayyānar* shrine, this *thottilam pillaiyam* (cradle child) was given to remind the god of the supplicant's request to cure his sick child (Elumedu, South Arcot District).

Plate 5.11) Terracotta images of a dog and a guardian for the shrine have been commissioned of the potter Vaithyalinga Pathar to give to *Ayyānar* (Cholavalli, South Arcot District).

Plate 5.12) This brightly painted couple standing on the wall of an *Ayyānar* shrine in Yarlandakullam, Madurai District, represents its newlywed donors, who have requested health, happiness, and fertility in their marriage.

Plate 5.13) Contemporary stucco images of *Ayyānar* and his two consorts, *Pūranī* and *Puṣkalā*, at Nathapatha, South Arcot District, portray the influence of modern media.

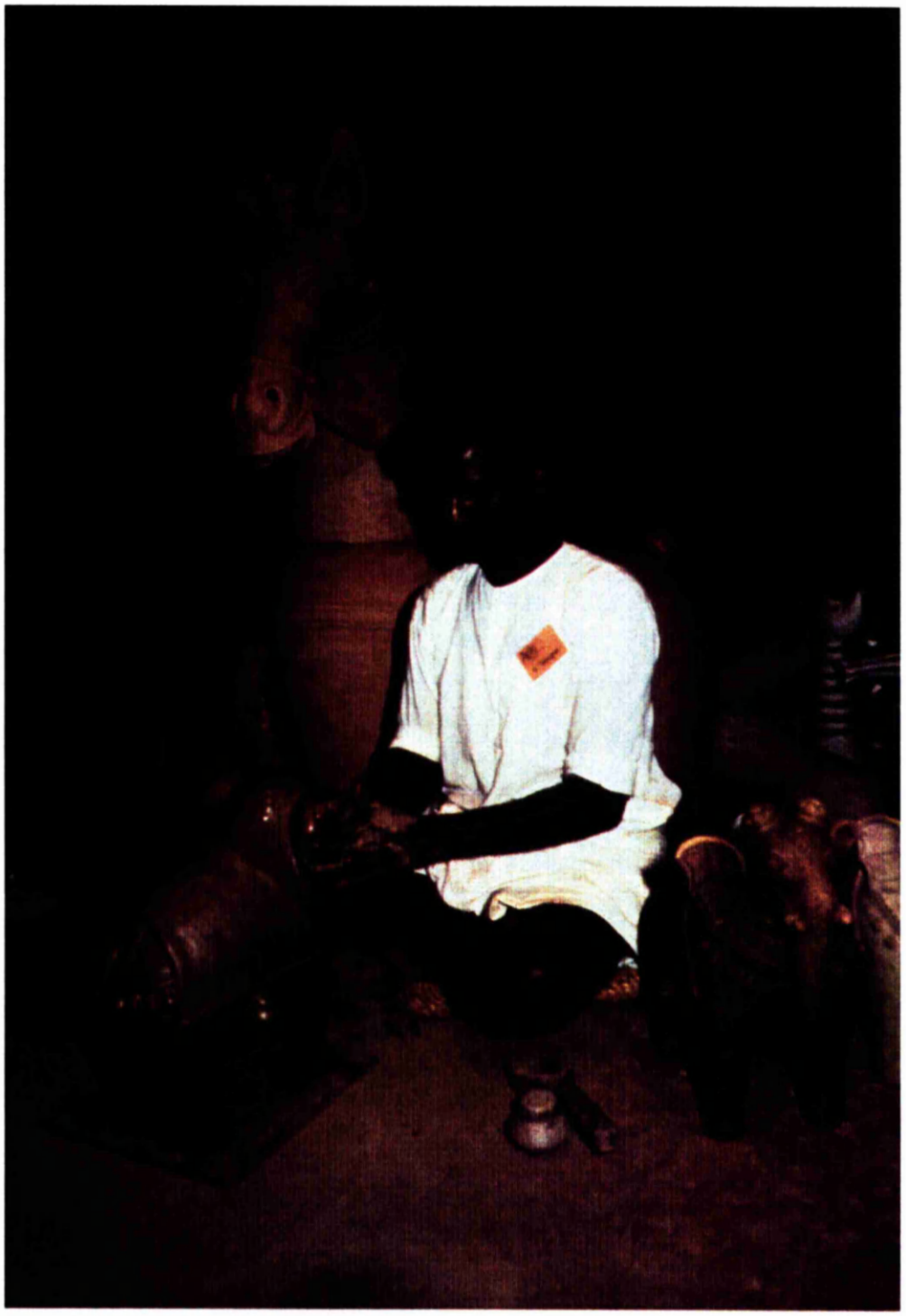

Plate 5.14) Sitting in front of one of his terracotta horses, Palaniappan sculpts an elephant at the exhibition entitled "Aditi", part of the Festival of India in 1985 at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.

Plate 5.15) On the main street of Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District, a girl in yellow stands directly before Vaithyalinga Pathar's house.

Plate 5.16) Vaithyalinga Pathar and his wife Amma stand between teak columns in the principle room of their house. Behind them in the corner are pots stacked before being taken to market.

Plate 5.17) Two rows of *kuthukuthurai* horses sculpted by Vaithyalinga and given to *Ayyānar* at Elumedu, South Arcot District.

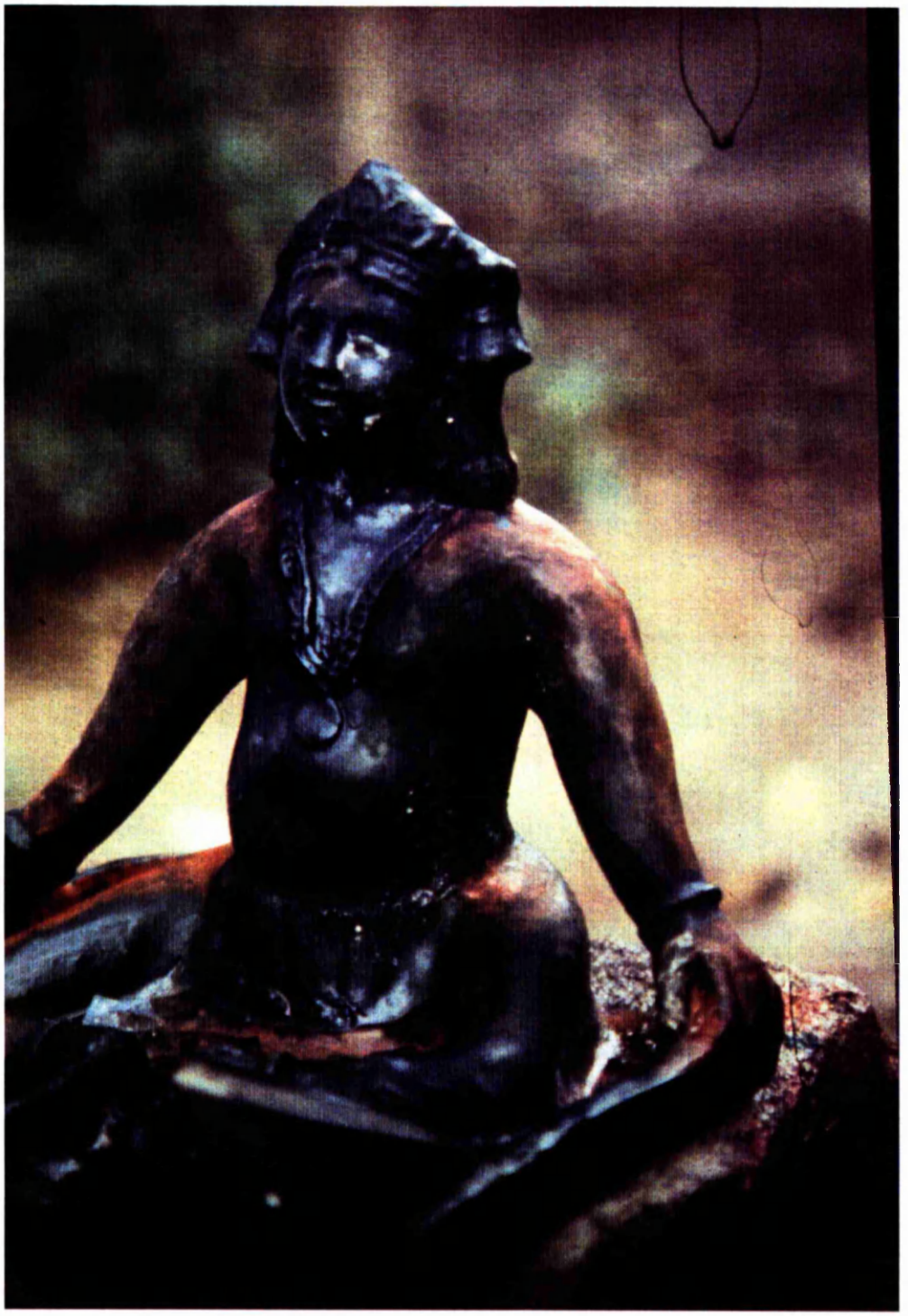

Plate 5.18) A refined *thottilam pillaiyam* figure, hand-sculpted by Vaithyalinga and given a moulded face, sits in the *Ayyānar* shrine at Gudithangichavadi.

Plate 5.19) Vaithyalinga's mound of clay behind his house

Plate 5.20) Vaithyalinga mixed rice chaff and water with his clay to achieve the proper consistency for sculpting.

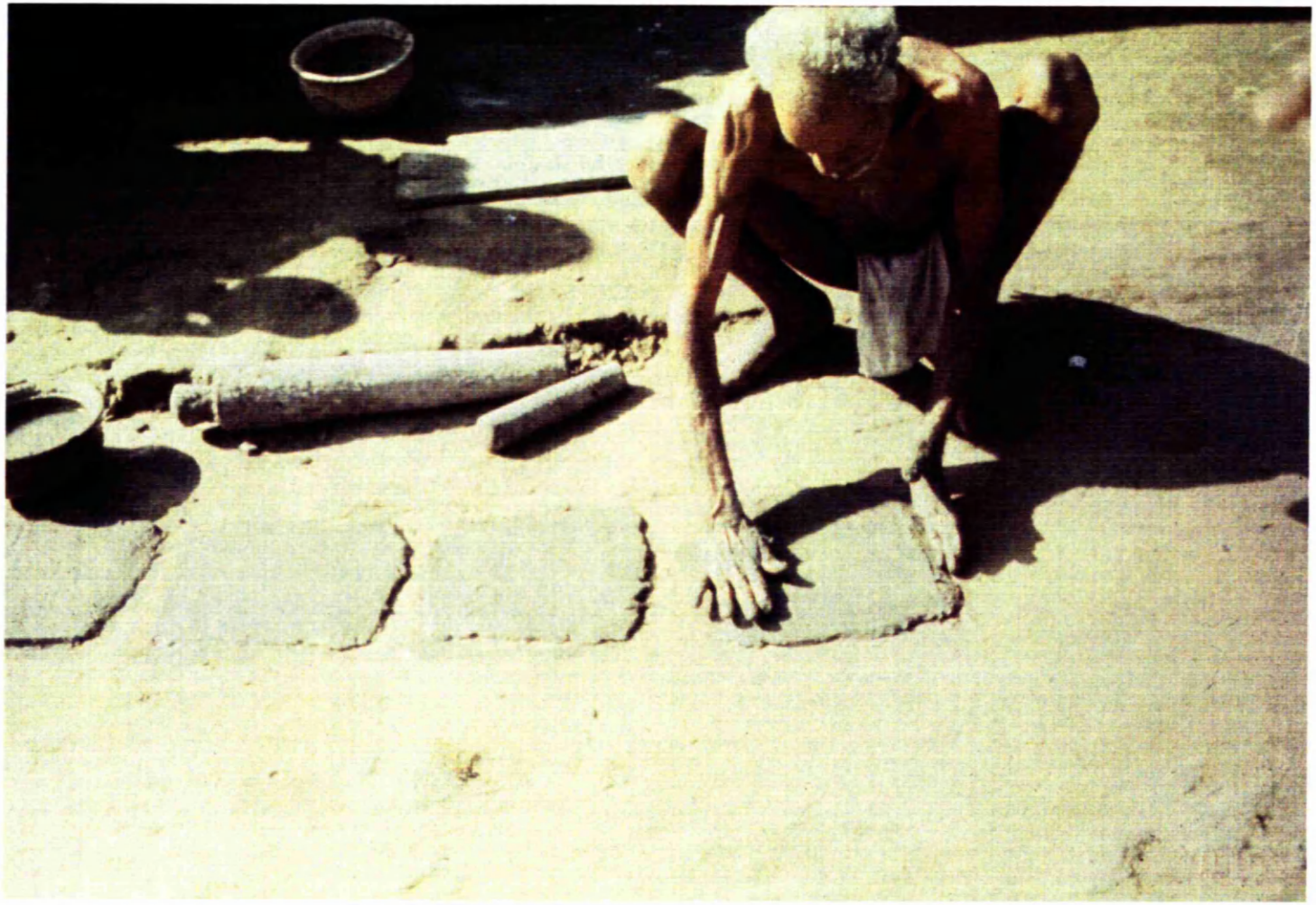

Plate 5.21) 1st he rolled out four pallets of clay.

Plate 5.22) Next he wrapped each pallet around an ash-dusted wooden dowel to form a tubular leg.

Plate 5.23) He joined the four legs together with ropes of clay which he smooths flat.

Plate 5.24) Using a mallet and anvil Vaithyalinga pounded the walls of the horse's body flat, thereby strengthening them.

Plate 5.25) Further ropes of clay were added to build up the sides of the horse's body.

Plate 5.26) These ropes of clay were then also smoothed into place.

Plate 5.27) At each stage of construction, the figure had to dry sufficiently before work could continue. Not until the fourth day was the potter able to bridge over the horse's back.

Plate 5.28) Once the horse's back is bridged, Vaithyalinga can add its tail and begin to build up its neck.

Plate 5.29) On the fifth day, Vaithyalinga added the rider's legs and lower torso.

Plate 5.30) While waiting for the rider's lower body to dry sufficiently, the potter added *mālas* with a *yālī* face to the horse's neck.

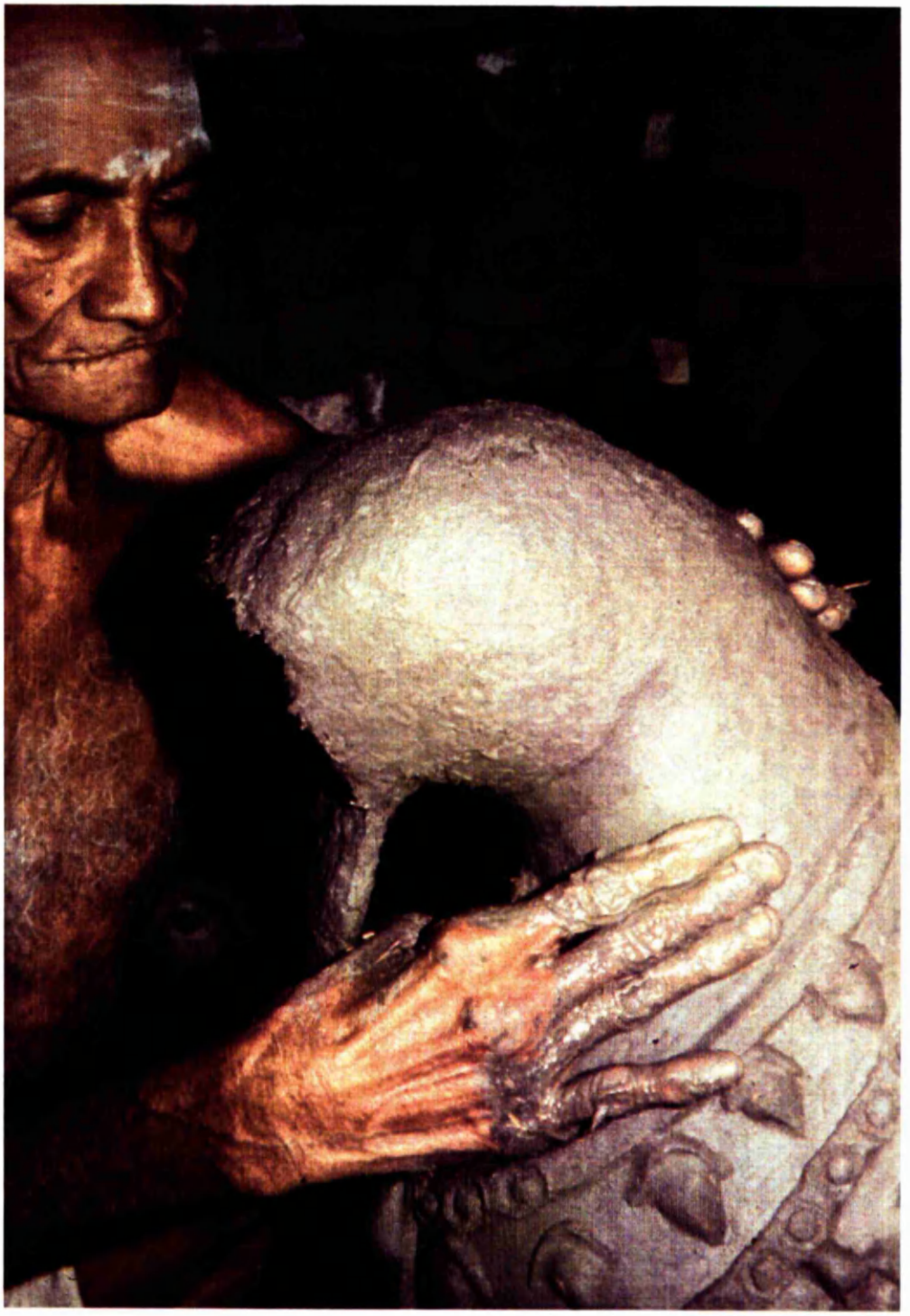

Plate 5.31) Two days were required for the most difficult portion of the entire procedure — sculpting the horse's head so that gravity would not make it sag.

Plate 5.32) On the ninth day, the potter added clay to a core of straw to form the head.

Plate 5.33) He used a framework of sticks to support the *Vīran*'s arms and head.

Plate 5.34) By the tenth day, the figure of the rider was ready to start sculpting the head.

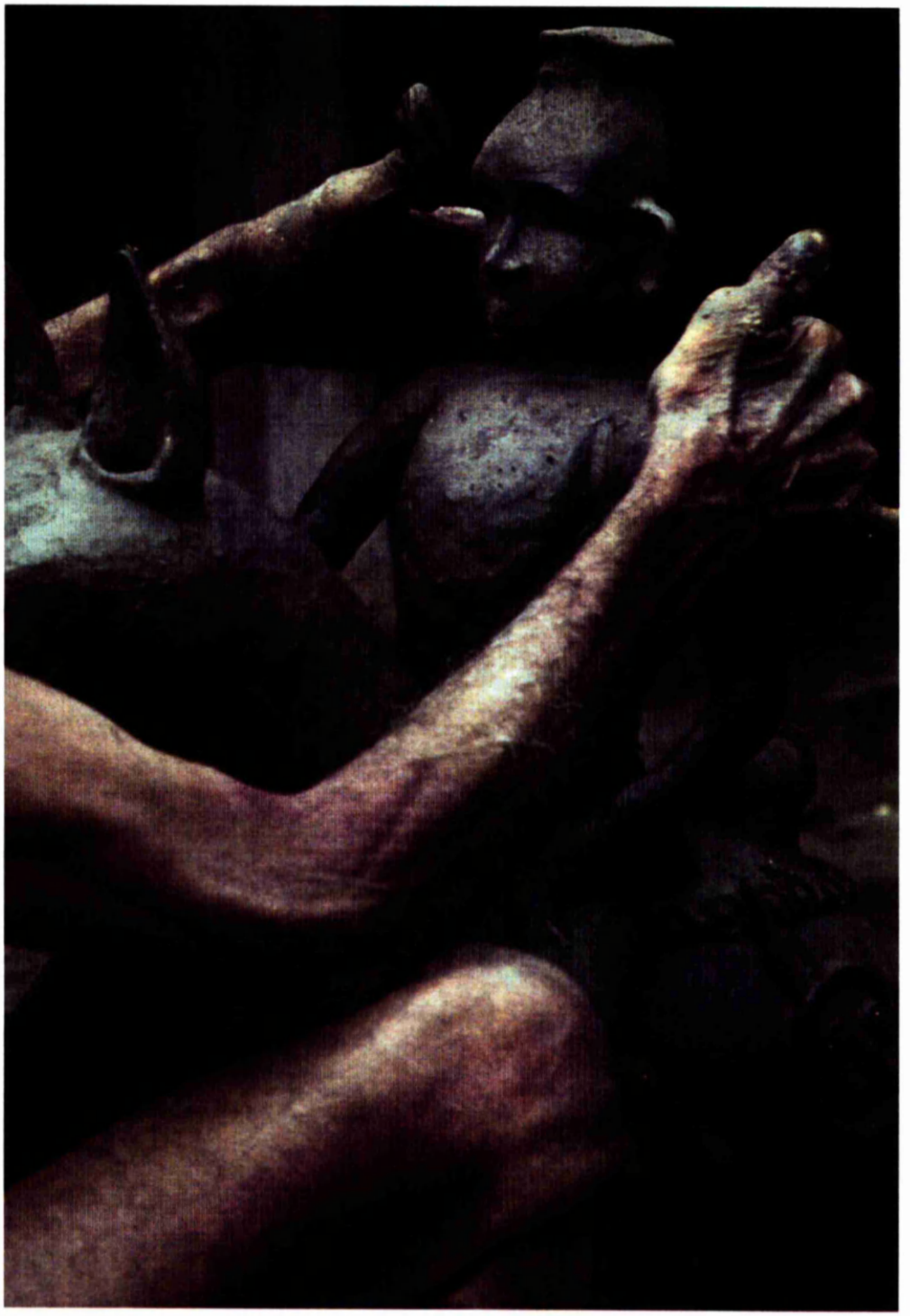

Plate 5.35) As his fingers gracefully gave form and character to the rider's face, Vaithyalinga said, "My mind thinks, my eyes see, my hands perform. Sometimes when I don't get the exact shape, I set it right by adding or removing clay."

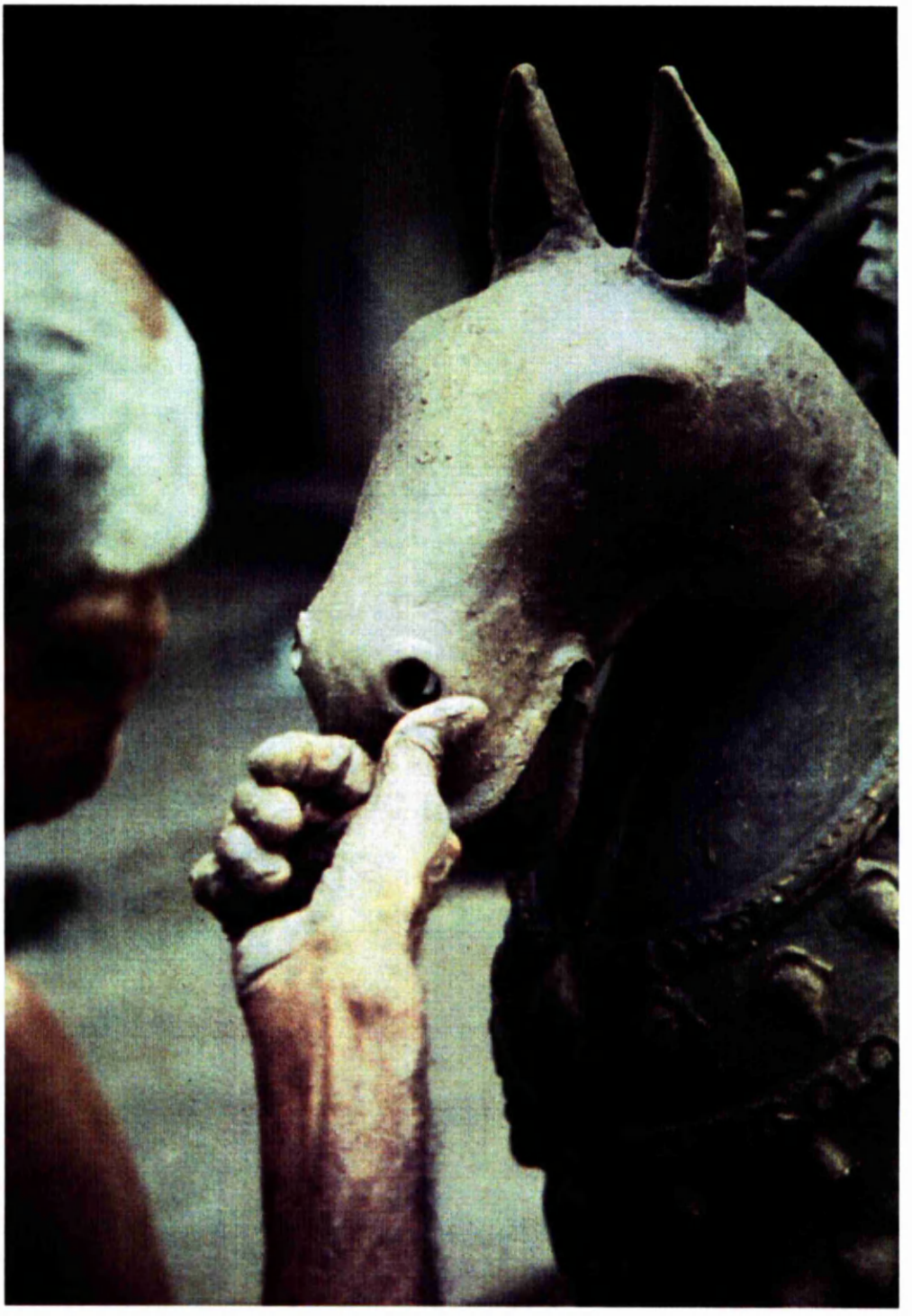

Plate 5.36) Next he began the finishing details on the horse's head.

Plate 5.37) With *Vīran*'s head complete, Vaithyalinga added final ornamental details to the rider's body.

Plater 5.38) Vaithyalinga Pathar finished sculpting his *kuthukuthurai* figure on the twelfth day and left it to dry completely in the sun.

Plate 5.39) On the fourteenth and last day, Amma spent the morning adding water to a mudhole and working it with her feet.

Plate 5.40) The *kuthkuthurai* figure was placed in the centre of a cleared area and unfired pots and fuel placed around it.

Plate 5.41) Then a dome of unfired pots was carefull built over the clay figure.

Plate 5.42) The dome was covered by a layer of cow dung, coconut husks and sticks, interspersed with fuel of cow dung, coconut husks, and sticks.

Plate 5.43) Next a layer of wheat straw was placed over the entire dome.

Plate 5.44) Finally a surface of mud was quickly applied, leaving a hole at the top and the bottom parameter uncovered, and the straw was lighted.

Plate 5.45) In less than three hours, the outer crust was broken and the dome of pots slowly removed to reveal the fired equestrian warrior emerging like a phoenix, its base still bright red with the heat.

Plate 5.46) Constructed in one piece and fired on the spot by Vaithyalinga's ancestor in the middle of the nineteenth century, each of these gigantic sculptures is more than five metres (16 feet) high (Semakottai, near Panruti, South Arcot District).

Plate 5.47) One of the monumental terracotta horses of Semakottai, South Arcot District.

Plate 5.48) *Thottilam Pillaiyam* in wooden cradles hanging from a tree dedicated to the goddess *Mārīamman* in Vandipalliam, South Arcot District.

Plate 5.49) The primary stucco image of *Ayyānar* newly painted for the *Therukuthu* festival at his shrine in Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District.

Plate 5.50) A line of old discarded horses stands to one side of the shrine (Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District).

Plate 5.51) A small terracotta image of *Ayyānar* and a *thottilam pillaiyam* given to the god during *Therukuthu* festival in Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District.

Plate 5.52) Newly painted *kuthukuthurai* figures given to *Ayyānar* during *Therukuthu* festival in Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District.

CHAPTER SIX
KĀLĪMĀ: A SURVEY AND CASE STUDY OF RITUAL TERRACOTTA ELEPHANTS GIVEN TO THE GODDESS KĀLĪ-MĀ IN EASTERN UTTAR PRADESH

The Mother Goddess is central to religious worship in almost every community in Deoria and Gorakhpur Districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh.[1] She is the spirit of place, the tutelary deity whose being encompasses the spot in which she resides (Plate 6.1). Just as the composition of environment and population varies, so each town and village views her differently. Known by hundreds of names, she is most often referred to as *Kālī-Mā* or just Mā (Mother). Unlike the infamous goddess *Kālī*, whose fierce and destructive nature requires blood sacrifice, *Kālī-Mā* nurtures and protects her devotees. [2] She is the all-wise Mother — unfathomable, yet just — demanding in return for her many boons offerings of food, flowers, cloth, and terracottas, but never

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[1] Although one published work (Jayaswal and Krishna *An Ethno-Archaeological View of Indian Terracottas*) focused some of its attention on Gorakhpur and Deoria Districts, and has been an invaluable source of comparative information, material in this chapter differs from that research on three accounts. First, it is centred upon documentation of terracotta elephants sculpted and given to the goddess, a subject which was not reported in any detail in the other work. Second, the only critical analysis by Jayaswal and Krishna of the production of terracottas at a specific site in either of the two districts was devoted to Nauranga, a commercial potter's village in Gorakhpur District which has previously had large exposure and publicization; while a large portion of this chapter is based upon a case study of one traditional, previously undocumented potter in Deoria District. Third, the purpose of Jayaswal and Krishna's work is a comparison of contemporary and archaeological data; while this research is based entirely upon ethnological documentation. The fieldwork for this chapter was conducted in Deoria and Gorakhpur Districts in 1981, 1988, and 1990. In his research, the author was greatly aided by Dr. Kalyan Krishna, Vidhu Shekhar Chaturvedi, and Anil Kumar Sharma.

[2] Devotees of *Kālī-Mā* in both Gorakhpur and Deoria Districts stated that their goddess was not the same as *Kālī* worshipped elsewhere. Kālī-Mā is not generally seen as a demonic or cruel goddess to be feared. Sumari, the *pujārī* for *Kālī-Mā* in Mundera, Deoria District, summed up that opinion by stating: "Our *Kālī-Mā* may give diseases sometimes, but usually she gives us health; she may cause death sometimes, but we worship her for birth and for life. She protects us from evil. We turn to her when we are troubled and she helps us. We pray to her and she finds the evil which is causing our problems and she fights it. She keeps the whole village safe." The name *Kālī* refers to time, the power of time, and usually designates the ongoing movement of life, of creation and destruction [Danielou pp 263 & 268 and Stutley p 137]. Remarking on the distinction between the goddesses worshipped in rural northeastern Uttar Pradesh and those of classical Hinduism, Jayaswal and Krishna [p 37] wrote: "We are watching a folk-religious practice which is either pre-*brahminical*, or non-*brahminical* (ie., not governed by certain set norms of a particular sect of *braminical* religion) in the process of transition or assimilation. The local goddess can be see in relaton to the *Shakti* cult, or the high goddess of the hindu pantheon yet the existence of the custom originated essentially in local magico-religious practice."

blood.[3] Her Hindu followers may come from any sect, *Śaivite* or *Vaiṣṇavite*, and any *jāti* (although fewer *Brāhmans* worship her than others).[4] She is petitioned for aid during agricultural calamities, family crises, civic disputes, infertility, and diseases (Plate 6.2). Many believe her to be the cause and cure of smallpox, cholera, and measles. When struck with one of these maladies, a person is said to be inhabited by *Mā*, and part of the cure is to worship and honour the goddess within.[5]

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[3] No instance of animal sacrifice was recorded in either district, and all subjects interviewed denied any awareness of such practices. Jayaswal and Krishna [pp 37-38] corroborate this observation, and state further that their evidence indicates that the terracotta elephants given to the goddess are in no way derivative from a sacrificial act.

[4] This is a local tutelary goddess, and no legend or mythology of her origin has been discovered either by Jayaswal and Krishna or through this survey. All of the local devotees and *purohits* who have been interviewed deny any knowledge of such legends.

[5] A devotee in Bistauli, Gorakhpur District, said: "When my husband was ill with terrible fevers, for so long he would not get well. (Allopathic) medicines did not cure him, *Āyurvedic* (medicines) did not cure him. Then our *pujārī* told me that *Kālī-Mā* had come inside him, that she wanted him for herself. The only way for me to make him well was to be good to her, to give her gifts, to fast and to pray to her. This I did, I made a long fast and I gave gifts of food and an elephant to her shrine. I prayed for her to leave my husband and to go back to her work for the whole village. Chetuji (her husband) also had to pray. He thanked the goddess for wanting him, thanked her for being inside of him; but asked her now to go. She left his body one night and his fever went away. Very quickly his hunger came back and he was strong enough to go with me to *Kālī-Mā*'s shrine outside our village to give thanks and food, and flowers, and another elephant. Since that time he is fine and is able to work normally. Now every day we put a flower in her shrine and on special days we give more." Sumari, the *pujārī* from Mundera, Gorakhpur District, said: "When the goddess is angry with someone, or if someone has smallpox or cholera, then we bring a female gardener (*mālī*) to the house of the ill person, and she offers water to *Kālī-Mā*. Then that person will get well." Crooke [pp 126-127] described the goddess *Rakshya Kālī* in Bengal as one who controls epidemics: "When disease appears she is worshipped at midnight, usually at a place where four roads meet, or at a cremation-ground, for which reason she is known as *Masan Kālī*, and when the harvest is unusually good a thank-offering is made to her. ...Others worship her at night at cross-roads, and the offerings presented to her image are thrown into a river or tank outside the village in hope that the disease might be transferred elsewhere." He goes on to describe a ritual to cure cholera in Nasik in which *Kālī* possesses a woman, announces how she entered the body and the proposed duration of her stay, and remains in possession of the woman throughout the ritual until the disease is erradicated. Brubaker [pp 153-154] discusses the relationship between the goddess and illness which "virtually equates the disease with the goddess or sees it as her direct manifestation. This view is expressed especially in individual cases of, say, smallpox, which are often seen as instances of possession by the goddess. Here the disease, far from expressing her wrath or punishment, is an act of special grace, however harrowing the experience may be. Around the patient's bed, acts of worship are performed and a reverent atmosphere maintained. The patient's fever, a prominent sign of possession, also shows that the goddess, too, is in an intensely heated condition; and both may be soothed by cooling foods and ritualized acts of fanning and bathing, offered either to the patient or to an image of the goddess. ...The goddess defends her people against the disease, inflicts it upon them, manifests herself in its symptoms, and is herself its victim."

Most *devīthānas* (shrines to the goddess) are small and unassuming, situated on the borders of communities.[6] Rarely containing any sculptural images of the goddess, a *devīthāna* is usually marked by one, three, five, or seven simple mud, plaster, or cement *piṇḍas* (solid cones) which represent the focus of worship (Plate 6.3).[7] Usually beneath a nim or pipal tree, these *piṇḍas* stand on the bare ground or upon a raised brick or cement platform. Many devotees of the goddess claim no knowledge of any symbolism for the *piṇḍas*, but others say they represent the different attributes of the Goddess.[8] While some shrines are marked only by a tree and an iron *triśūla*, a few are clearly influenced by the encroachment of a centralised Hindu media (through religious films, television, periodicals, and posters) and contain more stereotypical stucco or stone images of the Goddess (see Plate 6.34).

In all of these shrines, the goddess is honoured with gifts of terracotta elephants — her favourite mount, which she rides as she roams the earth battling adversity. These elephants are donated as part of votive bartering with the goddess, similar in purpose to terracotta sculptures elsewhere in India.[9] When the devotee has received a requested boon, he or she

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[6] For the purpose of this thesis, twenty-six *devīthānas* were documented in Gorakhpur District (in Kewanhara, Gogaha, Asarkhapur, Chhawni Bazar, Nauranga, Dharampur Bazar, Chhatiram, Kodalia, Okari, Maharajganj, Gorahwa, Subiya, Orwalia, Hanumanganj, Garaura Bazar, Shamdeoria, Gonariababu, Baruabidyapet, Bhitauli, Bistauli, and Devkali), and twenty-three in Deoria District (in Sirzhum, Ramghat, Chowri Sathawa, Gauribazar, Subabazar, Lohaipar, Ghivohi, Pokhar, Gorikund, Pochohiya, Kakol, Piparhi Barakua, Dharmoli, Hetimpura, Mundera, Banwari Tola, Bhagwanpur, Bhisawan, Madhavapur, and Koilgarha).

[7] Translated literally as a 'body or individual body' [Danielou pp 47 & 307], a *piṇḍa* is viewed as the goddess incorporate. A devotee in Garaura Bazar, Gorakhpur District, remarked: "We have no need of an image of *Kālī-Mā*, these *piṇḍas* suffice. In some big temples such as Maharajganj or Gorakhpur (city) they have big images, but for our purposes here these *piṇḍas* are enough. We know that the goddess is here. She helps us when we need her. Why would we want more? If the goddess demands that we build her a temple, then we will do so. But we have always made *pūjā* like this here, and she seems content." The Stutleys [p 225] point out that *piṇḍa* is also the name given to the rice or flour balls given in offering to *pitṛs* (the spirits of the dead).

[8] Some villagers referred to the seven cones as *Sat-Mai*, the seven goddesses that might relate to the *Sapta-Mātrika* of classical Hinduism, although Jayaswal and Krishna [p 36] feel that any orthodox connection would be difficult to prove.

[9] R.P.Gupta of Garaura Bazar said: "We give elephants for so many reasons to the goddess. Each person has their own reasons, but we know that she likes elephant most of all. We

commissions an elephant from a local potter to give to *Mā* in her *devīthāna* (Plate 6.4). Offerings can be made at any time during the year (Plate 6.5) (except during *Pitṛ-pakṣa*, the two-week period of ancestor worship),[10] although each community has traditions that state a preference for the most propitious occasion. The festivals most commonly associated with offerings at a *devīthāna* are *Navarātri* and *Śarad Pūrṇimā* (the night of the full autumn moon)[11] — both celebrations are during the month of *Āśvina*, September-October — and *Rāmanavāmī* (celebrating the birth of *Rāma* at nearby Ayodhya during *Caitra*, March-April).[12] Although not as prevalent as the elephants given to *Mā*, terracotta horses are placed in *devathanas* (shrines dedicated to a male tutelary deity, most often referred to as *Dī* or *Dī-Bābā*) (see Plate 3.10). Although these two types of sculpture are never found in the same shrine, sometimes a *devathana* to *Dī-Bābā* (also called a *Babathana*) containing one or more horses will be situated near one of *Kālī-Mā*'s *devīthānas* containing elephants. This chapter, however, focuses solely upon the more widespread production and ritual use of images associated with the goddess.

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believe that on elephant she can fight evil fully, so we give her elephants so that she can keep evil away." Wadley [Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion, p 160] described a *vrata* to *Lakṣmī* in which women in central Uttar Pradesh sculpt clay images of elephants as part their *pūjā* to the goddess requesting wealth and 'fruits'.

[10] Jayaswal and Krishna p 37. Sharma [Festivals of India, p 112] comments; "On each day of the fortnight of *Pitra Paksha*, water is offered in honour of the departed ancestors and also in honour of the one who had died during the preceding year, as by doing so the new soul may join the already departed souls. *Brahmanas* and their wives are invited and food, specially *khir* (rice boiled in milk) is offered to them, with the belief that whatever is offered to them would reach the souls of the departed family members and they would feel satisfied and rest peacefully in the heaven." According to Danielou [p 307]: "The first progenitors of the human race, as well as all the ancestors burned or buried with the proper rites, are worshiped under the name of Ancestors (*pitṛ*). They are considered as equal to the gods, though sometimes opposed to them. They are immortals and share in the glorious life of the gods. The rites known as *Śraddhā* (homage) are performed in their honor, and offerings called *Piṇḍas* (bodies) are presented to them. *Manu* [3.284] says: 'One must consider the Ancestors as gods.' " See also Stutley pp 226-228 and Ambalal p 29..

[11] Raghavan p 150 and Sharma Festivals of India p 108.

[12] Ibid. pp 73-74.

Before describing the forms and styles of terracotta elephants given to the goddess in these two districts and focusing upon the potters who make them, the following detailed portrayal recounts a *pūjā* to *Kālī-Mā* by Rhunu Sahu, a factory-worker's wife in Orwalia, Gorakhpur District. Just before sunset on the evening of *Śarad Pūrṇimā* , Rhunu and her two teenage daughters joined a procession of devotees on their way to their local *devīthāna.* Upon her head she carried a bright red basket containing a terracotta elephant cushioned in rice straw, while in her right hand she held an iron cooking pan. Her daughters carried baskets on their heads containing flowers, freshly milled grain, grams, packets and jars of spices, oils, and *ghī,* plus special food, incense, and cow-dung. Together with the fifty-one other villagers carrying similar baskets and bundles, she chanted an invocation to the *Kālī-Mā* as they walked along:

"Victory to the Goddess!
Praises to our Mother *Kālī*!
Come and celebrate Her Glory!
Victory to our Mother *Kālī*!"

They reached the *devīthāna* at the edge of Orwalia's ploughed, but unplanted fields, just before sunset. Upon a square cement platform beneath a large and ancient *nīm* tree, three *piṇḍas* proclaimed the presence of the goddess. As the procession reached the shrine, the devotees fanned out in a line before it, each person placing his or her bundles upon the ground. One of Rhunu's daughters collected three rocks from the edge of the field and, arranging them in a triangle before her mother, started a fire fueled with cow dung. Rhunu heated oil in a pan placed upon the flame, while her daughters kneaded wheat dough into small cakes and then filled them with *grām dāl* which Rhunu cooked in the hot oil (Plate 6.6). When exactly nine of these stuffed *puris* were cooked, the girls made *gulgullā* (wheat cakes sweetened

with molasses). On either side, the other women, surrounded by their children, were similarly busy preparing a harvest feast for the goddess. While the men quietly smoked *bīdīs* and squatted in a huddle at the back, the women chattered happily among themselves: Performing *pūjā* on *Śarad Pūrṇimā* is a pleasant and time-honoured tradition that her devotees had been anticipating all year long. In preparation, they had been fasting all day and looked forward to feasting in the morning with the goddess. When the food was ready, Rhunu placed it upon green leaves, while from the baskets the girls removed leaf bowls filled with *ghughari* (grams soaked in water), *khekua* (small sugar biscuits), and condiments. Although the meal was now prepared, everyone had to wait until dawn to consume it.

The *devīthāna*'s old *purohit* emerged from the clump of squatting men and carefully performed *abhiśekha*, washing each of the *piṇḍas* on the platform with holy water. Then he adorned them with *sindūr* (vermilion) and with marigolds handed to him by the women. Placing a simple terracotta *kalaśa* filled with holy water in front of the *piṇḍas*, he marked the pot with ash and vermilion, put green leaves and a coconut on its top, and draped it with a garland of marigolds. The old man then invoked the spirit of the goddess to enter the clay pot, and the ritual began. Waving a bowl of smoking camphor over the cones, he lighted several clay *dīpas*. Each woman dipped her hand in rice paste and turmeric and put seven or nine imprints of her outstretched fingers upon the edge of the platform. Rhunu reached into her large red basket, lifted out the clay elephant, and carried it to the platform. As she placed it next to the seven *piṇḍas*, she touched her head to the ground and tearfully gave thanks to *Kālī-Mā*. This was the moment of return, of giving the goddess her due. Months earlier, at a time of great stress and anxiety, she had prayed to the goddess for divine intervention, asking that her

unemployed husband might find work. Shortly after her pleas, he had been hired by an urban factory eighty kilometres away, and the family's condition had improved. Now, even though her husband was rarely home, there was enough money for food, oil, and clothing for herself and her daughters, plus some that she could use to start building a fund for dowries to ensure appropriate marriages for the two girls. In gratitude, Rhunu was fulfilling her commitment to *Kālī-Mā* by giving her an elephant commissioned from the local potter. At a signal, the women lighted *agarbatti* (incense) and began to sing together the ancient *ślokas* to *Kālī-Mā*, their voices high-pitched, shrill, and intense:

"Mother!
You have innumerable devotees upon this earth
Who are worthy and gentle;
But I happen to be the naughtiest among them.
Really it would be difficult to find
Someone as undevout and unstable as me,
O Goddess!
And yet, it is not in Your nature to reject me,
For although many sons are sinful,
An unworthy mother is never to be found.

O Mother of the World!
I have never been able to serve You properly
And have not been able to afford much for Your worship.
The reason that You still love an ungodly wretch like me
Is that although many sons are sinful,
An unworthy mother is never to be found.

O Mother with a face as lovely as the moon!
I desire not for *Nirvāṇa* [redemption]
Nor do I long for earthly luxuries,
Neither do I seek the sciences or look for pleasures;
I just pray that my life may be spent chanting Your sacred names."

As the full moon rose high over the horizon, the women from each family took their *chunai* (scarves) from their heads and wrap them around the cones before returning to their seats behind newly replenished dung fires to sing more *ślokas*:

"O Mother of dark complexion!
I have never been able to worship You properly
With the things You most like in Your *pūjā*;
Moreover, my vocal chords have uttered terrible crimes;
Yet Your generosity to me and Your care of me
Are examples of Your virtuous nature.
Only such a kind-hearted mother as You
Can offer refuge to such an ungodly wretch as me.

O Mother Goddess
With Your pity as deep and engulfing as the oceans!
Please do not think me impudent
That I only call out for You now;
A child who is perturbed by hunger and thirst
Summons and calls out for none but his mother.

Great Goddess!
There is no one as undevout
And steeped in sins as me;
But then, there is no one as holy as You.
Keeping this fact in mind,
Do what You think is best."[13]

Following these prayers, the long night's vigil at the shrine began and the atmosphere became festive as the villagers formed a large circle, talking and laughing among themselves. The women sang endless songs recalling local legends and encounters — some profound and philosophical, but most bawdy and humorous. As the sky brightened with approaching dawn, the feast was spread out before the goddess on leaf plates and bowls. All was quiet now, as the replenished *dīpas* and incense honoured *Kālī-Mā*'s meal. Then the women gave a small portion of each *prasād* to the *purohit* and took the remaining food to eat with their families while huddled quietly around the fires. Although the food was relished after the long fast and many months' anticipation, it had to be eaten in total silence, since any noise, even the barking of a dog, would disturb the Goddess and interrupt the sanctity of the moment, possibly cancelling the benefits of the *pūjā*. When all had eaten, the

[13] These *ślokas* were not recorded on *Śarad Pūrṇimā* although it is believed that they are the same as witnessed at Orwalia. They were recited to the author by a *purohit* in Chowri Sathawa, Deoria District, with translation assistance by Vidhu Shekhar Chaturvedi.

night of thanksgiving was finished. The many gifts and bounties of *Kālī-Mā* had been reciprocated with food, elephants, prayers, and praise, and Rhunu's obligations to the goddess were met until the next *Śarad Pūrṇimā*

The terracotta elephants given to the goddess in Deoria and Gorakhpur Districts are integral to many different festivals and individual *pūjās* and are sculpted in a wide variety of shapes and styles. Most, but not all, of these sculptures, such as that given by Rhunu during *Śarad Pūrṇimā* , are assembled from elements (bodies, legs, heads, trunks, and sometimes ears) thrown on the wheel and then decorated by hand. Usually some device on the elephant's back connotes the presence of the Goddess. Some potters represent her with a sculpted figure, while others merely suggest her being with a cone.[14] The forms of a potter's basic vessels generally indicate the shapes of his sculptures.[15] While the figures of southern Gorakhpur District are long and thin, those of the north usually are rounder. The elephants in Deoria District are simple, relatively unadorned, and rarely painted (Plate 6.7), while

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[14] With the exception of the region in close proximity to Nauranga and Gorakhpur town, almost all of the *devīthānas* documented in both districts contained terracotta elephants upon which the goddess was represented by a cone or *howdah*, rarely an image. Jayaswal and Krishna [p 39] believe that this aniconic representation of the goddess may be symbolic of the bells sometimes offered in *pūjā*. Their similarity to *pindas* found in *devīthānas* would appear to suggest, instead, that they are simply symbols of the 'body' of the goddess. Ram Dhari Prajapati, a potter from Mundera, Deoria District, stated: "I do not make images of the goddess to go on the back of the elephants I sculpt. I have seen those made in other areas, but this is the tradition in my village. It is the way in which my father taught me, and it is what my customers want (See Plate 0.1, p 4). I could make those figures if I wanted, but my customers do not ask for them. This is what the goddess expects." Shiv Bachan, another potter of the same village, recently traveled to Delhi and had seen the popular figures made in Gorakhpur District, so he had begun to sculpt his elephants with riders. He said: "The elephant is more beautiful made like this (see Plate 6.35). ...No, my customers do not yet ask for them to be like this, but they like them. Mostly I make them like this because I enjoy it. In this place I am the best potter and I want people to know it. I can make images as fine as anyone in other places. Maybe this place can be known also for its fine images. Before this, who will know us?"

[15] Refering to a similar relationship in adjacent Bihar, Jayaswal and Krishna [p 71] state: "The form of some ritualistic figurines like the elephant with accessories used for marriage and sacred-thread ceremonies to a very large extent depends on the shape of the principle pot around which the entire form is developed. Two examples in this connection are noteworthy: An elongated pot called *labani* (for storing palm juice/toddy) forms the belly of the elephants produced in and around Patna, is the popular earthen pot of the area. While in Gaya, globular pot the most common form, is used instead for making belly of the same terracotta form. Depending on the shape of the two, the Patna product is marked by slim elongated body while the final product of Gaya has pronounced bulky appearance."

those of central and northern Gorakhpur District often are heavily ornamented with decorations of applied strips and balls of clay in a choice of leaves, flowers, snakes or lizards, garlands, jewellery, and/or animal trappings (Plate 6.8). When donated to shrines, these latter terracottas are frequently painted in bright colours. Some were collected and taken to Delhi a few decades ago, with the result that Gorakhpur has become well known in recent years for its elaborate terracottas — particularly ones produced by a family of potters in the village of Nauranga.[16] The Central Government's All India Handicraft Board gave two of these sculptors the National Award for Master-Craftsmen[17] (similar to the 'Living National Treasures' in Japan), the highest recognition given to Indian craftsmen, bringing with it exhibitions, wide publicity, and large sums of money. Another family member, Gulab Chand, has exhibited his sculptures and production techniques in Great Britain, the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., and Japan. Most of the figures made by these Nauranga potters (Plate 6.9) are inspired by the elephants and horses used in local votive rituals — and, indeed, their sculptures are still given to neighbourhood *devīthānas* and *devathānas*[18] (Plates 6.10)— while their style of production is being copied by an increasing number of potters in both districts (Plate 6.11). However, the effect of travel, wide exposure, and mass production for export to other Indian cities and abroad inevitably has altered the nature and form of these sculptures, rendering them stiff and ornate when compared to the traditional figures still made by potters who have had less exposure to urban centres. Interviews with the senior craftsman at

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[16] The production process of Nauranga-style terracotta sculptures has been described in detail in ibid. pp 75-80. See also Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay*, pp 167 and 171, and Bussabarger and Robins pp 28-29.
[17] Suk Raj in 1966 and Shyam Deo Prajapati in 1980.
[18] Jain and Aggarwala [p 176] state: "According to a myth the enraged deity speaks through the *sokha* or shaman and can only be appeased if and elephant or horse from Guleria Bazar (Nauranga) is offered to her."

Nauranga[19] clearly indicate that this decorative style of terracottas was not inherited, but was begun by him between 1955 and 1960. Previous to that time he had only been engaged in tile-making, and his father and predecessors, although competent potters, had not sculpted at all. Prior to his trip to Delhi to receive his Master Craftsman award, he had brightly painted many of his sculptures; but in the capitol he had discovered that customers prefered the natural slipped colours. In place of painting, he began to add heavy hand-applied and moulded decorations to the previously simple sculptures. In response to greatly increased sales and national recognition for this craft, he founded a training centre for young potters, sponsored by the government,; and in consequence this figural style has rapidly spread throughout eastern Uttar Pradesh, particularly in Gorakhpur District. In direct contrast, the elephants given to small *devīthānas* only a few kilometres from Nauranga and created by potters sculpting in accordance with inherited prescriptions are remarkably free of self-conscious craftsmanship (Plate 6.12). Their wheel-thrown, unornamented forms are almost abstract, pared down to the simplest shapes whose assembly becomes graceful and lyrical.

Many styles of sculpture stand in the large *devīthāna* to the local goddess *Karwal* at Mazgaonwa, on the main highway entering Gorakhpur District from the south. Huddled around the base of a gigantic *pīpal* tree are twenty to thirty elephants, ranging from large ones almost one-and-a-quarter metres (4 feet) high and sculpted in the Nauranga style to small ones only several centimetres high, made of single pots with applied pinches of clay that suggest heads, trunks, ears, and eyes (Plate 6.13). A constant stream of passing travellers stops to pray at this shrine for a variety of reasons. Many

[19] Jayaswal and Krishna pp 81-83.

ask the Goddess to protect their journeys, their worship administered by two resident *Brāhman* priests (Plate 6.14).[20]

The actual process of modernization is evident at the local *devīthāna* in the village of Tiwain, Deoria District. A series of miraculous cures has inspired donations of large sums of money from affluent devotees, many of whom have come from long distances to worship at the shrine. Over a period of two decades, the simple shrine has been transformed gradually into a structural temple, beginning with the typical platform crowded with terracotta elephants under a large *pīpal* tree. The platform was first enlarged, then covered with a shed, and finally housed in a brick-and-cement building designed around an enclosed chamber containing nearly a hundred elephants ranging from .3 to 1.8 metres (1 to 6 feet) high (Plate 6.15).[21] The larger Tiwain elephants are more ornamented than most other elephants in Deoria District. A covered hall allows for circumambulation of the chamber in a fashion typical of classical temples. While the Goddess is still represented only by *piṇḍas*, posters of primary Hindu gods and goddesses line the walls, and the permanence of the temple contradicts the original ephemeral nature of the terracottas.

This gradual absorption of local custom into mainstream Hinduism is exemplified in the heart of the district's capital city of Gorakhpur, where a

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[20] The *Karwal Devīthāna* at Mazgaonwa was documented on several occasions in 1980, 1988, and 1990. With its proximity to a major highway and the number of passing travelers it draws in to worship, it is similar to the Orissan shrine documented in Kimbiriguda (Chapter Four, p 172). In 1988, *pūjās* were witnessed at Mazgaonwa during *Sarad Purnima*. One of the two *purohits*, Gowri Sankar, commented: "You are seeing many women worshipping our goddess at this time. Many have been here throughout the entire night, cooking food for the goddess and praying. Many have traveled from villages a long ways from this place to make *pūjā*. They do this once each year. Also here are lorry drivers who always stop while they are passing to make *pūjā*. When they give to the goddess and make *pūjā*, she blesses their driving and their journey is safe. This *thāna* is so large because *Karwal-Mā* has helped so many people. So much has been given in thanks."

[21] Ibid. p 35. Photographs taken at Tiwain and of the Hatthi-Mai temple in Gorakhpur city were damaged; but a photograph of the former, after the platform was enlarged and the shed built, but before the building was erected, may be seen in ibid. Plate 9.

large structural temple to the goddess *Hātthi-Māi* [22] is wedged between shops and houses. Within the inner sanctum of the temple are stone images of the goddess and her sisters, whose forms are derived directly from classical sculptures and whose *Brāhmanical* worship is greatly altered from the traditional rituals in rural *devithānas*. Terracotta elephants made by urban potters are still placed in her shrine, but some of the personal contact between devotee and deity has been lost in the hierarchical trappings of orthodox ritual.[23]

Many of the potters in Gorakhpur and Deoria Districts carry the family name of *Prajāpati*, believing that they are descended directly from this Lord of Creativity. In one of their *jāti* legends, *Prajāpati* appeared before an early ancestor in his dreams and instructed him in the art of sculpting images. The god was so pleased with the potter's sculptures that he decreed that neither the potter nor his descendants would ever go hungry if they continued to make images according to his (*Prajāpati*'s) wishes, that they would monopolize the craft of image-making, and that any other craftsman who tried to sculpt similar figures would become diseased and die.[24]

Except for those made by popular commercial potters working in Nauranga, a few nearby villages, and the city of Gorakhpur[25], most sculptures

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[22] The name of the goddess *Hātthī-Māi* is not to be confused with *hathi* (elephant). Local devotees claim that this is simply the name of their tutelary deity and although terracotta elephants are given to her, there is no correlation between the two words.

[23] Corroborated by Jayaswal and Krishna (p 35]: "By patronage of socio-economically influential class or persons a few *devi-thana* have attained the form of a temple of permanent nature, such as the *Hātthī-Māi* temple in Gorakhpur town. The worship of the deity in this temple does not follow the basic practice of occasional offering to a *devī-thāna*; the noteworthy change is the adoption of the pattern of regular worship of a hindu temple.

[24] A similar version in Nauranga is refered to by Saraswati p 81.

[25] Most terracottas sold in festivals and markets are handled by agents who purchase the sculptures directly from the potters in their villages. Regarding this relationship, Jayaswal and Krishna [pp 70-71] commented: "The margin between the purchased good by the middle man and the customer is about 1:3 in the latter case. For, usually a ritualistic elephant which is sold to the customer at Rs. 20, is purchased from the craftsman by the middle man at Rs. 6 or 7 only. When sold to middle man or even the customer in regular currency, the cost of one set or composition may vary from Rs. 4 to 30."

are made only on commission and are paid for within the *jajmānī* system. The overall style of each potter's work usually is hereditary, unless influenced by modern consumer demand, although the figure's decoration or choice of colours (if it is painted) generally is left up to the devotee. Regarding his commissions, Shamdev, a potter from Nauranga, said, "The rural people buy the terracottas and pray to them. If they are sick they plead, 'O Goddess *Kālī*, O Reverend Mother cure me and I shall offer you an elephant.' They say, 'O *Dī Mahārāj* if you bless me and make me all right, I will offer you a horse (Plate 6.16).' "[26] In order to understand better the potters of this region, their lifestyles, placement in society, and the production and use of their terracotta sculptures, this chapter focuses on one potter in Deoria District.

Ram Dhari Prajapati (*jāti*: *Kanaujia*) lives in the village of Mundera, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh. Unsure of the year in which he was born, Ram Dhari considered himself about fifty-two or fifty-three years old in 1990. He married his wife, Kalawati, at about eighteen (she is two years younger), and together they raised seven children — three sons and four daughters. One daughter has married and lives apart, while their two older sons work in factories a long distance from Mundera. Living with Kalawati and Ram Dhari are three daughters, one son, the wives of the two other sons, and five young grandchildren. They share a simple mud house reinforced with brick and supporting a roof constructed of tiles made by Ram Dhari. In the four small living/sleeping rooms surrounding a central courtyard, space is at a premium, and every available centimetre is in use. Possessions are stored in boxes, trunks, baskets, and cloth bundles resting on rafters below the gabled roof, bedding is rolled up and placed during the day on the up-ended edges of the few *charpais* (wood-and-rope beds), and the resulting space allows the women

[26] Quoted in Shah *Form and Many Forms of Mother Clay* p 47.

to sort vegetables, chillies, and spices, weave baskets, make and mend quilts, and do a variety of household chores. Covered by an awning, one corner of the courtyard is reserved for the kitchen, where meals are prepared on a small clay stove made by Ram Dhari and fueled by cow dung. In another corner, two large clay containers hold the family's supply of rice and wheat.[27] Ram Dhari's wheel and workshop are outside the house and across an open area, which also serves as a sort of lane, bordered by a small pot-storage lean-to and a thatched barn for their one milk cow. The potter's compound is on the very eastern edge of the village, and beyond it stretch the rice paddies and wheat fields that support the community's major crops.

When asked about the position of potters in Mundera, Ram Dhari commented, "There has been no change in the number of potters working in this village since the time of my grandfather. There are three *Kumhar Prajapati* families, each with one working potter. We are well treated." Most of Mundera's population of about 2,500, living in three hundred families, are farmers whose principal castes are *Brāhmans* and *Harijan Kurmis* (outcastes). While most are Hindu, sixteen families of Muslims live peaceably in the community. Mundera has an elementary school that goes up to the fifth standard (grade); otherwise, students may go to a high school up to tenth standard at Rampur, one kilometre away, or to a degree college (sixth standard through master's degree) in the town of Kushinagar, only nine kilometres away. Eighty percent of Mundera's citizens claim literacy, but only thirty percent could be said to read well.[28]

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[27] Similar storage vessels are shown being constructed in Plate 1.16.
[28] Mundera's *grām pradhān* (village headman) said: "Literacy is not really the question, because many people in this village can read. But most do not read much. Only perhaps one-third would be able to read the newspaper. These people will read and keep the others informed on news and events. But still, we hope for better education for our village."

Two devīthānas to the goddess *Kālī-Mā* stand within the village precincts: A large rectangular brick shrine with an interior room (appr. 3 x 5 metres or 10 by 16 feet) lies on the edge of the main road between Deoria and Kushinagar and a smaller mud-walled one (appr. 2 x 1 1/2 metres or 6 1/2 x 5 feet) is nestled in the centre of the village (see Plate 6.34). Both are administered by a *Harijan purohit* (outcaste priest) named Sumari, who also works as a labourer for a local *Brāhman*. Ram Dhari and his family regularly worship at the smaller shrine, and they consider *Kālī-Mā* to be one of their household deities. They are *Vaiṣṇavite*, so their house contains a prayer niche with posters of *Viṣṇu*, *Rāma* and *Sītā*, *Hanuman*, and *Gaja Lakṣmī*. Ram Dhari acts as *purohit* himself in some local rituals, such as the *Cak Pūjā* performed for brides during their wedding ceremonies, as described in Chapter Two (see Plates 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5). He is also regularly commissioned to sculpt small erotic figures of *Balabhadra*, the God of Fertility, to be taken home and installed on the household altars of the brides' natal families for a year after the marriages (Plate 6.17).[29]

Ram Dhari owns less than one-half acre of land on which he farms rice, wheat, and a few vegetables. He and his family are vegetarian, subsisting on a simple diet of rice, *rotis* (bread), *sattu* (porridge of barley and chick-peas), and curries made of lentils, beans, and vegetables. Kalawati needs to purchase some of the grains, vegetables, and spices they consume. The demand for his vessels and sculptures are enough that he rarely needs to tenant farm. He said, "I do some farming (on his own land) and get rice and wheat from that, but I also receive portions of grain, vegetables, and spices

[29] Ref. Chapter Two, footnote 42. Phulawa, the *mausī* (aunt) of the bride for the ceremony for which this figure was made, commented: "This murti is taken to our home (the bride's natal home) here in Mundera, but not and never does it go to her new home. That would be inauspicious. It shall be placed in the home shrine for one year and then it is given to the river. We believe that in the meantime she will conceive."

from my clients through *jajmani*. I supply them with the pots they need and they give me food or other things I need in exchange. I take my vessels to local weekly markets and to the daily market in Kushinagar.... My full cash [annual] income is 3,500 rupees (£116/67p or $194.44), but this includes 1,000 rupees (£33/33p or $55.56) from selling elephants and horses on commission."[30] Ram Dhari sells an average small pot, 100 by 150 mm (4 by 6 inches), for one rupee (3.3 pence or 5.5 cents); a pot 200 by 250 mm (8 by 10 inches) for two rupees (6.6 pence or 11 cents); and a pot 300 by 400 mm (12 by 16 inches) for three rupees fifty paise (11.7 pence or 19.4 cents). For an unadorned elephant 460 mm (18 inches) high, he receives forty-five rupees (£1/50p or $2.50).[31]

The production of vessels and sculptures is accelerated during the three summer months of *Caitra* (March-April), *Baisākha* (April-May), and *Jyeṣṭha* (May-June), when all the crops are harvested, the fields lie fallow, and the hot, rainless days guarantee a constant low humidity that prevents cracking. Water vessels are in particular demand during this season, and fresh roof tiles are required for their annual replacement before the heavy monsoons begin. A preference for weddings and sacred-thread ceremonies at this time ensures that the families who participate in these rituals must discard and restock all earthenware. Working on the wheel remains a man's job, although no prohibition in this part of eastern India restricts women from touching the

[30] Ram Dhari also noted that he gets no income from the sale of his own crops. Jayaswal and Krishna noted that in 1980-81 the average annual income of potters in Deoria District was 2,123 rupees (averaged from Tables 2 and 3, pp 12 and 17-18). Exchange based upon 1990 rates.

[31] In contrast, Dr. Krishna, in private conversation, noted that in most villages in eastern Uttar Pradesh, terracotta sculptures are made as part of *jajmānī* and not for cash sales. Unlike most other areas of the Gangetic Plain, the potters surveyed for in this research denied that any press-moulded terracottas were produced or sold in Deoria District, and none were seen.

wheel.[32] Kalawati and her daughters beat the potter's wheel-thrown vessels into their final shapes, and they slip, paint, and repair items before firing. Although Ram Dhari may sometimes paddle his pots, he never paints or slips them; that work is done only by women.

Ram Dhari quarries his clay from a pit a few kilometres away and spreads it out to dry on the ground in front of his house. When the large clods are thoroughly dry, he and the women in his family break them up by pounding them — first with a *kudālī* (shovel) and then with a *cholani* (hatchet) — to remove any sticks, stones, roots, insects, or impurities. Once the clay is powdered, Ram Dhari adds water and sand (one part sand to six parts clay) and then kneads the mixture, first with his feet and later with his hands, to remove any bubbles or remaining inconsistencies. He forms the prepared clay into a mound that is covered by a damp sackcloth and placed in the shade of his neighbour's brick house. The clay needed for each day is taken from this mound, further wedged to remove bubbles, shaped into large cones, and kept on a disused wheel located to one side of the work area.

The process of sculpting a terracotta elephant generally takes Ram Dhari only two days (Plates 6.18 through 6.22). On the first day, he throws and moulds all of the elements that will be assembled later to form the sculpture. Ram Dhari's wheel (*cāk*) is solid stone, 940 mm (37 inches) in diameter and 75 mm (3 inches) thick, socketed in the centre of its underside and fitted onto a wooden pivot that rises from the ground. Propelled by a stick (*chagetā*) placed in a hole on the rim and revolved anticlockwise, the wheel attains a momentum that allows the potter to throw vessels for eight to ten

[32] Kalawati stated: "Why should I not touch the wheel? I do not work on the wheel only because I have other duties." Krishna even discovered the wife of a potter in a village near Patna who made vessels and sculptures on the wheel because of the incapacity of her mentally handicapped husband [Jayaswal and Krishna, pp 66-67].

minutes before it needs additional propulsion. Ram Dhari begins his elephant by centring a large lump of clay on the wheel and, once it is revolving rapidly, squatting to throw the four tall cylinders that will become the legs. Placing these to one side, he then throws a pot for the head, a long tube for the trunk, two plates for the ears, and a wide cone to represent the goddess. Within thirty minutes, all of these elements are finished and lined up to dry in the shade. If he has a commission to make more than one elephant, or perhaps a terracotta horse, Ram Dhari will continue to throw all the necessary parts; otherwise he usually proceeds to fill his other orders: vessels for barter or sale, roof tiles, livestock feeding troughs, or cooking stoves. At some point on this first day, he leaves his wheel to make another basic element of his elephant sculpture: the back. To prevent sticking, he dusts ashes onto the outside of a large, inverted terracotta pot before placing a lump of clay in its centre. Using a concave anvil, he gently pounds the clay over this improvised drape-mould[33], shaping it into a large bowl with a round hole in its centre. Removing it from the drape-mould, he allows it to dry alongside the other elements.

When all nine of these component parts have dried to a leather-hard stage (usually by the following morning), Ram Dhari begins assembling them. First, he places the four large cylinders upright and together upon the ash-dusted ground so that their outside edges conform to the rim of the upturned drape-moulded bowl. Resting the bowl upon the legs, Ram Dhari rolls thin ropes of clay and uses them to smooth the seams between bowl and legs. Then, reaching inside the hole at the top with his smaller convex anvil, he beats the exterior walls of the clay with his mallet until the seams have

[33] Not to be confused with the press-moulds used for making sculptures or decorations in other parts of India.

disappeared and the curved line of the bowl merges uninterruptedly into the curve of the legs, forming a four-legged dome. Leaving the body, he creates the elephant's trunk by adding the long, thin tube to one edge of the smaller inverted pot. He then applies the two halves of the clay plate to its opposite edge to make ears. With one hand holding this head against the middle of the slope between two of the legs and the top, Ram Dhari then adds and smooths in additional strips of clay to secure its position, temporarily supporting the tip of the trunk with a dried clod of earth. Next he shapes balls of clay into the elephant's eyes. Short clay ropes applied alongside the trunk become its tusks, and a pinch of clay becomes the tail. Finally, Ram Dhari symbolically places the Goddess upon her mount, using clay to attach the wide cone directly over the central hole. At this stage, when the basic form is complete, the potter may choose to add further decorations to his sculpture. These often include four dowels of clay on each of the cardinal points surrounding the cone to represent *Kālī-Mā*'s *howdāh* (seat), and/or clay lozenges or leaves applied to the elephant's sides. When the sculpting is finished, the figure is left to dry completely in the sun. It will be fired when there are enough vessels and sculptures to fill a kiln.

On the morning of the firing, the prepared vessels and sculptures and all the necessary fuel (cow dung, tree bark, whatever wood is available, rice husks, and rice and wheat straw) are assembled and laid in the sun in the open area in front of the house. Kalawati and her daughters paint most of the clay objects with a slip composed of water added to *kabis* (a local yellow mineral)[34] (Plate 6.23). Kalawati commented, "Before firing, we check all the

[34] Refering to the slip given to pottery in adjacent Azamgarh District, Watt [pp 85-86] remarked: "But before being fired the pottery is polished and painted or washed with a special preparation called the *kabis*. This is comprised of yellow earth (a form of fuller's earth) known as *piari mitti*, or powdered mango bark and of *sajji mitti*, or crude carbonate of soda." Jayaswal and Krishna [p 56] state further: "In certain cases the figurines are

pottery closely for cracks or breaks. When we find them, we try to mend them using these small pieces of clay (Plate 6.24)". In the early afternoon, Ram Dhari's family helps him begin to construct the ānwā (open kiln), its size dependent upon the number and size of the items to be fired (Plates 6.25 through 6.32; also see Plate 1.36). His daughters begin by bringing baskets of ashes to a cleared area in front of the house. Spreading the ashes evenly 25 mm (1 inch) thick, Ram Dhari forms a circle on the ground roughly 1.7 metres (5 1/2 feet) in diameter. Upon these ashes he spreads a layer of rice husks, followed by a thick layer of cow-dung cakes that have been mixed with straw. He covers the manure with strips of tree bark and a few sticks of wood. Next he determines the exact centre of the circle and puts upon it the neck of a broken pot. Around this centre, but not touching it, he places the sculpture and overturns the largest pots, balancing them all carefully upon sherds. Conferring constantly with Kalawati, he removes and replaces sherds, rebalancing the pots until he has built an inner circular layer of large vessels that both of them believe will fire evenly. Gradually they add the smaller vessels, all upside-down, to create a precarious dome, leaving a central column to be filled with cow-dung fuel and capped with the same broken pot neck as a chimney. When the clay dome is complete, the daughters pour baskets of rice husks into all the spaces, followed by chopped-up cow dung mixed with chaff. They then cover the entire structure, except for the chimney, with straw, which Ram Dhari surfaces with a thin layer of wet mud, leaving an uncovered ring about 100 mm (4 inches) high around the base. Finally, the potter carries a terracotta bowl of red hot coals from inside the house and

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dipped into the solution of yellow earth (*kabis*) of medium to thin thickness. Such specimens are again dried in shade. It may be noted that this process is applicable to the specimens which are used in unpainted form, and thus in vogue in the parts of Gorakhpur, Deoria and Azamgarh districts. It is not in practice to other areas, where the specimens are painted after firing."

pours it into the chimney, quickly covering the chimney with a thin layer of dirt. Drawn by the draft from the uncovered base ring, the coals rapidly ignite the interior fuel. Once the *ānwā* is fully lighted, Ram Dhari removes the thin layer of dirt over the chimney to ensure even heat and an oxidized firing. From beginning until lighting, the process of construction takes two and a half to three hours. The entire area around the kiln is then cleared up and swept clean and the oven is left to burn overnight. Ram Dhari checks it periodically but does not alter it or add to it.

The next morning, the *anwa* is cool enough to open quickly. Kalawati and her two daughters help Ram Dhari remove the fired crust and the first layer of small pots. As he lifts out each vessel, Ram Dhari hands it to one of the daughters, who relays it to her mother who taps each with a fingernail, listening for the sound which will indicate imperfections or cracks, before stacking it at the side of the house. When he reaches the sculpture in the centre, the potter himself carries it out of the firing ring to the edge of the compound, where he dusts it off and checks it. If there are any minor breaks, he repairs them immediately with a clay compound. The terracotta elephant now is ready to be picked up by the devotee who commissioned it.

Ram Dhari Prajapati supplies elephants to the devotees of many local shrines within a radius of about five kilometres (Plate 6.33). Accompanied by offerings of incense, camphor, cloves, bananas, apples, coconuts, grain, breads, confections, and marigolds, his clients place the elephants in *Kālī-Mā*'s *devīthānas*. Although specific incidents may require an individual to donate a figure at any time during the year, most elephants are given during the annual festival of *Rāmanavāmī* (also called *Caitnāmi Mela*). In an average year, only a few sculptures are given to each shrine, but every three years *Rāmanavāmi* is celebrated with special attention, and on these occasions

many terracotta elephants are ordered and offered. Outside the *Kālī-Mā* shrine in the centre of Mundera, dozens of women crowd together in the narrow space to sing countless verses of songs praising the Goddess and enumerating ways to gain her blessings. Within the tiny brick building, Sumari, the local *purohit*, lights lamps, incense, and camphor and places the offerings of food and flowers in front of the image of the Goddess, depicted in brightly painted stucco astride a tiger and slaying a demon (a pose obviously copied from the classical portrayals of *Mahiṣāsura Mardinī*) (Plate 6.34). After the broken remains from the previous year have been placed alongside others on the roof (Plate 6.35), new gifts of one or two of Ram Dhari's terracotta elephants are installed on either side of the image, standing there as sentinels for *Kālī-Mā*, available for her to ride in her battles against disease and misfortune, until vows are renewed the next year with freshly sculpted offerings to the goddess.

Plate 6.1) A sacred pipal tree, abode to the spirit of *Kālī-Mā*, tutelary goddess of Gorikud, Deoria District.

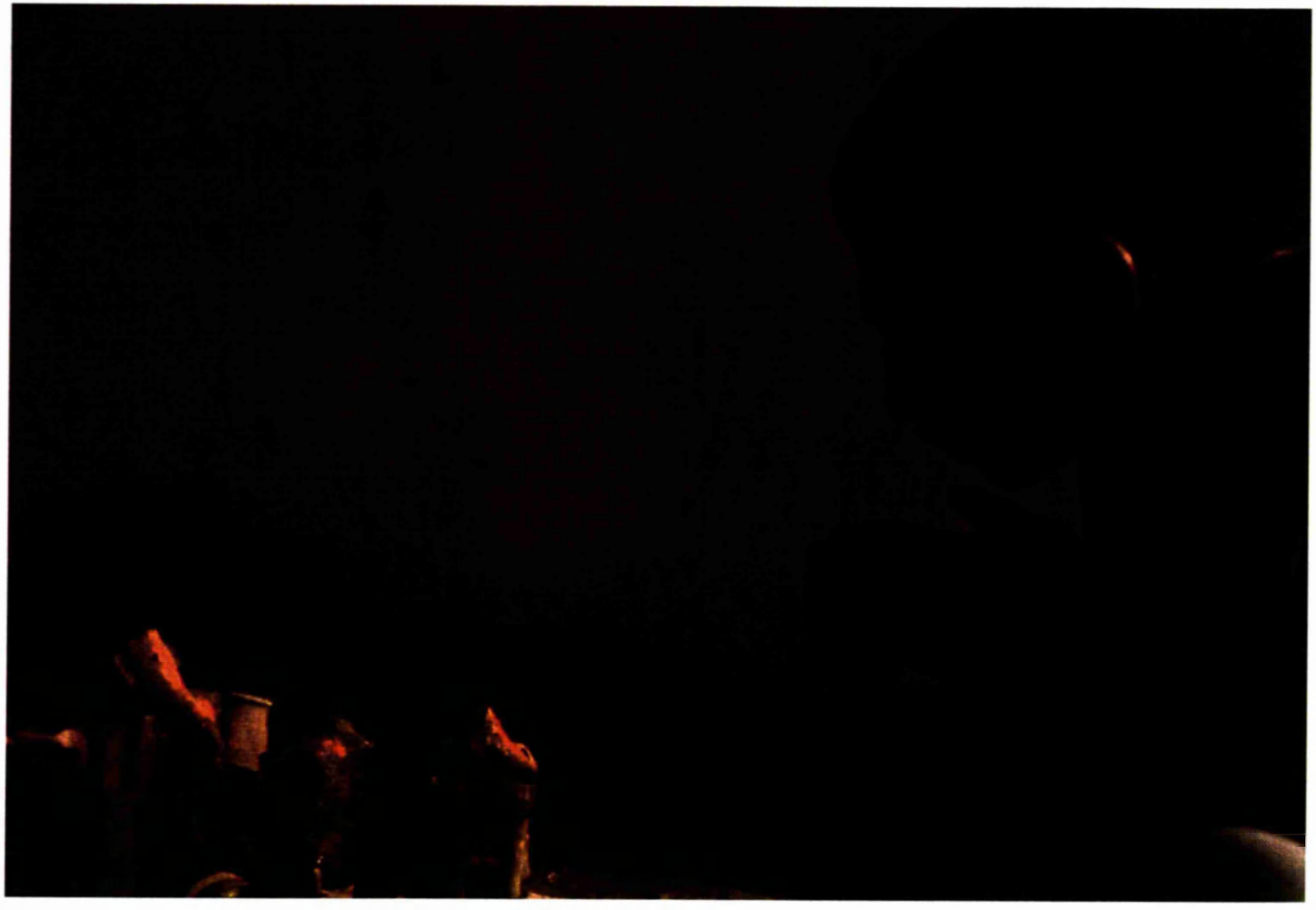

Plate 6.2) Bowing before the goddess *Kālī-Mā*, a farmer in Bistauli, Gorakhpur District, prays for healthy crops. Beside him are small terracotta elephants that have been given to *Kālī-Mā* by the grateful recipients of her favours.

Plate 6.3) A terracotta elephant stands behind a single *piṇḍa* representing *Kālī-Mā* surrounded by offerings of calendulas, while beside it is a *triśūla* (Kushinagar, Deoria District).

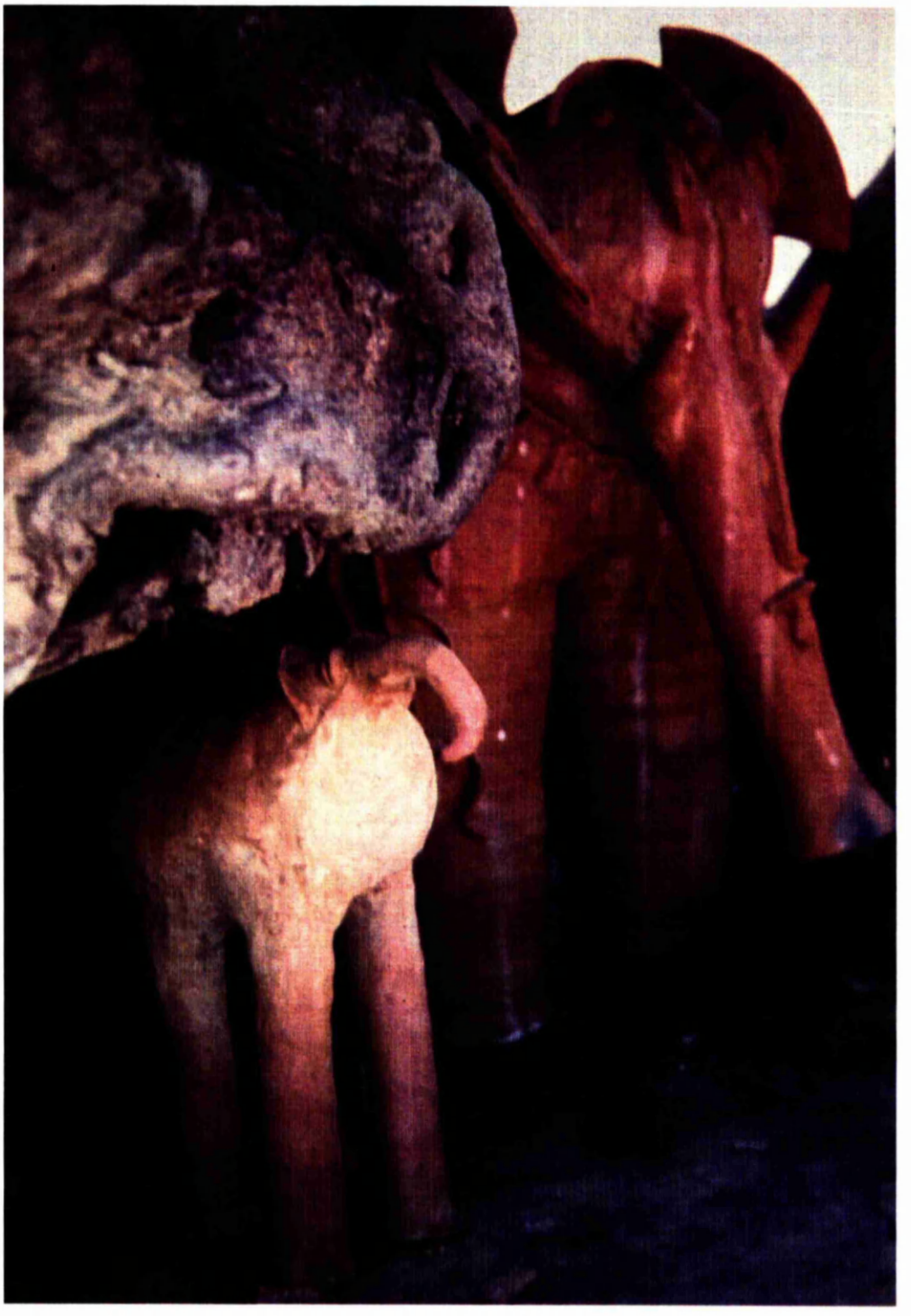

Plate 6.4) Two terracotta elephants given to *Kālī-Mā* at Ghivohi, Deoria District.

Plate 6.5) Offerings of flowers at a roadside *devīthāna* near Bistauli, Gorakhpur District.

Plate 6.6) Devotees of *Kālī-Mā* cooking food for offerings at *Śarad Pūrṇimā* in Orwalia, Gorakhpur District.

Plate 6.7) Most elephants sculpted in Deoria District are simple and unornamented (Banwari Tola).

Plate 6.8) The rounded shapes of many traditional votive sculptures in northeastern Uttar Pradesh resemble the basic forms of local household pottery. Those of Gorakhpur District, such as this one in Bhitauli, are often more highly ornamented than those of Deoria.

Plate 6.9) Sculpted by a Gulab Chand, a potter who has traveled throughout the world exhibiting his craft, this elephant is made in a style that combines heavy ornamentation with a stiffness in design induced through mass production (Nauranga, Gorakhpur District).

Plate 6.10) On the outskirts of Gorakhpur town, a *Kālī-Mā* shrine is filled with ornamented elephants sculpted in Nauranga.

Plate 6.11) Ornate sculptures made by potters strongly-influenced by the modern Nauranga style stand in a shrine in Shamdeoria, Gorakhpur District.

Plate 6.12) All elements were thrown on the wheel and combined to form this simple abstract elephant in Chhatiram, Gorakhpur District.

Plate 6.13) The *Brāhman purohit*, Gowri Shankar, conducts *pūjā* at the *Karwal Devīthāna* at Mazgaonwa, Gorakhpur District.

Plate 6.14) Elephants of many different styles and sizes are clustered at the *Karwal Devīthāna* in Mazgaonwa, Gorakhpur District.

Plate 6.15) Large elephants up to 1.8 metres (six feet) high stand inside the permanent *Kālī-Mā* shrine at Tiwain, Deoria District.

Plate 6.16) A *Brāhman* farmer prays to *Kālī-Mā* at a shrine outside his home. Beneath the tree is a pile of old, broken terracotta gifts (Garaura Bazar, Gorakhpur District).

Plate 6.17) An image of *Balabhādra*, the local god of fertility, sculpted by Ram Dhari Prajapati and decorated with reni seeds, dries in the warm ashes of a recently-opened kiln before being collected by the bride's party and worshipped in her natal home (Mundera, Deoria District).

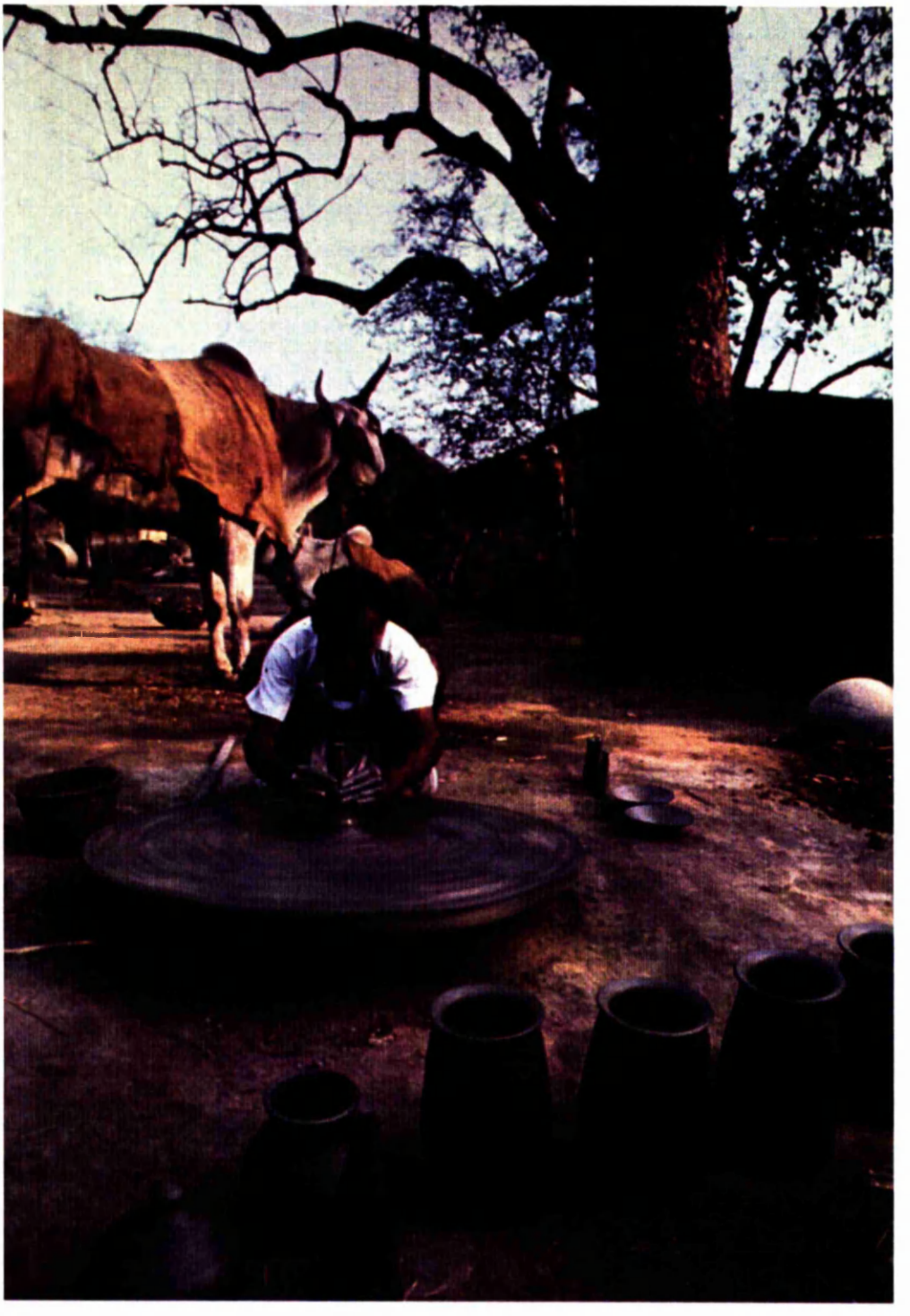

Plate 6.18) Ram Dhari begins each elephant by throwing nine elements on the wheel: four large cylinders for legs, a pot shape for the head, a long cone for the trunk, two plates for ears, and a wide cone to represent the Goddess.

Plate 6.19) While the other elements dry in the shade, Ram Dhari uses a concave anvil to pound a lump of clay upon the surface of an upturned pot, forming a rounded bowl that will become the body of the elephant.

Plate 6.20) Once the various elements have been joined with strips of clay and smoothed into even surfaces, the potter adds the eyes to the elephant's head.

Plate 6.21) Finally, the wide cone representing the Goddess is mounted upon the elephant's back.

Plate 6.22) Further decorations are optional, such as the small clay lozenges spaced all over the body of this elephant.

Plate 6.23) When the elephants are fully dry, Ram Dhari's daughter, Rita, paints their entire surfaces with a slip that will deepen the red colour of the clay during firing.

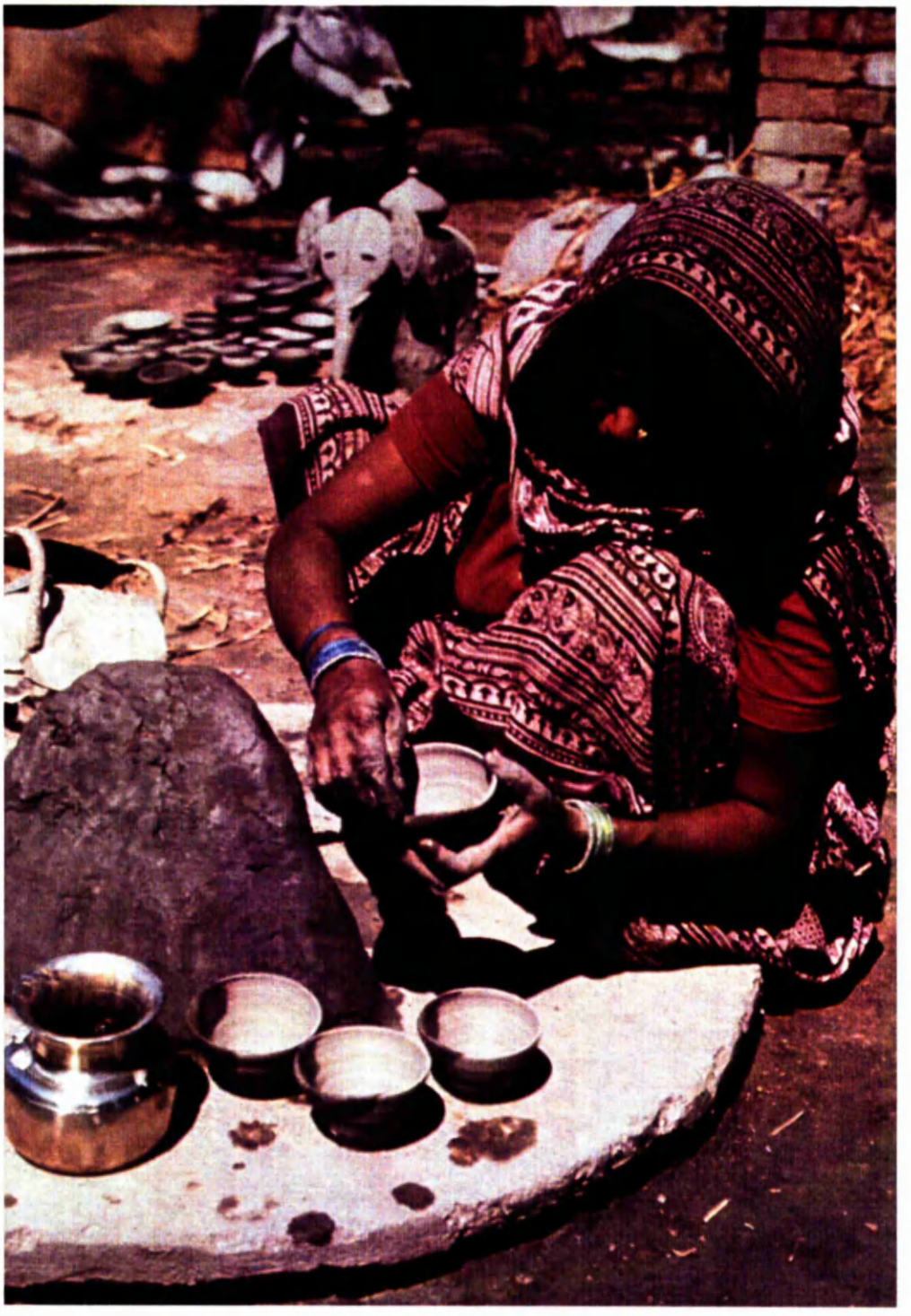

Plate 6.24) Kalawati mends broken, unfired teacups prior to firing.

Plate 6.25) The process of firing begins in the morning, when everything that is to go into the temporary kiln (fuel, vessels, and figures) is spread out to warm in the sun. Ram Dhari first makes a circle of ashes 1.7 m (5 feet) in diameter, and then covers the ashes with a layer of rice husks, followed by a layer of cow-dung chips.

Plate 6.26) After carefully finding the centre of the circle and marking it with a broken potsherd, Ram Dhari, his wife Kalawati, and their daughter Rita begin by placing the elephants and the largest pots in a tight circle.

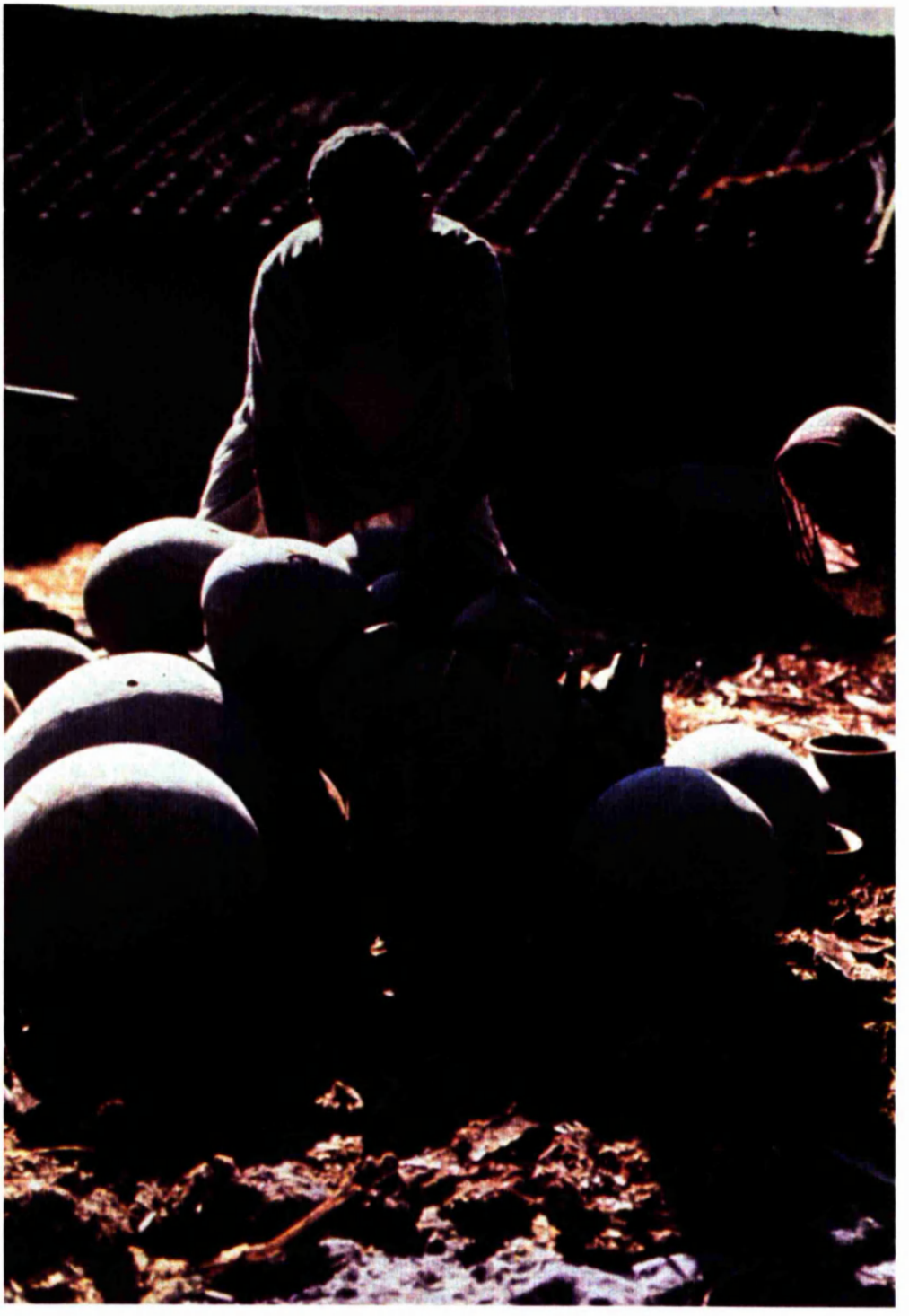

Plate 6.27) Upon this core they gingerly balance other upturned pots to gradually build a dome.

Plate 6.28) Rita and Kalawati pour basketloads of rice husks and dried cow manure over the dome, followed by a layer of wheat and rice straw, leaving a central chimney capped by the broken neck of a water pot.

Plate 6.29) Ram Dhari spreads a layer of mud over the entire dome, except for the chimney and a 125-mm-high (5 inches) ventilation space around the base.

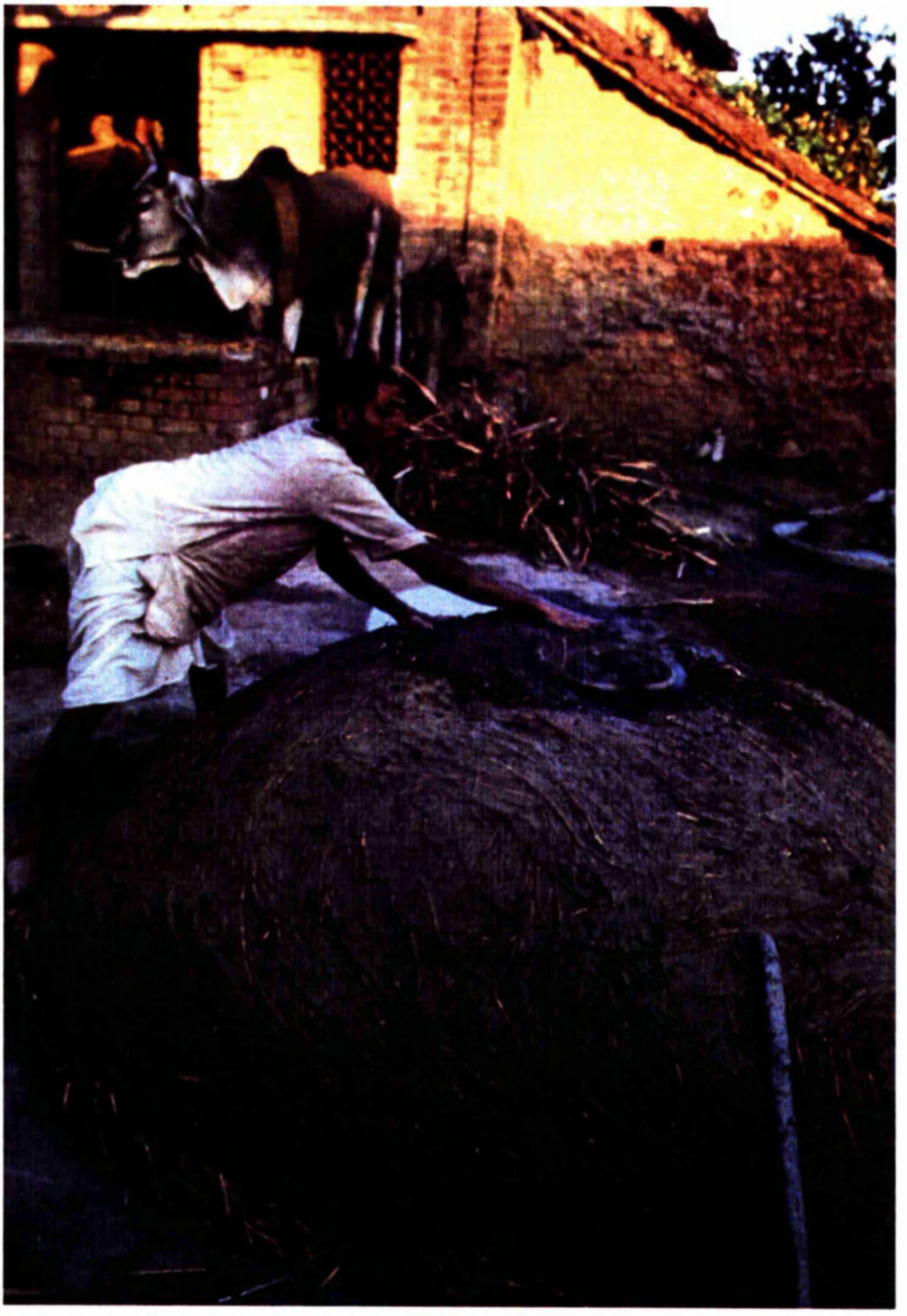

Plate 6.30) A large bowl of red-hot coals is then brought from the house and poured into the chimney, which is immediately plugged with dirt to encourage the flames to burn outwards. Once the kiln is burning evenly, the temporary covering on the chimney is removed and everything is left to fire overnight without refueling.

Plate 6.31) The next morning, the kiln is cool enough to dismantle rapidly.

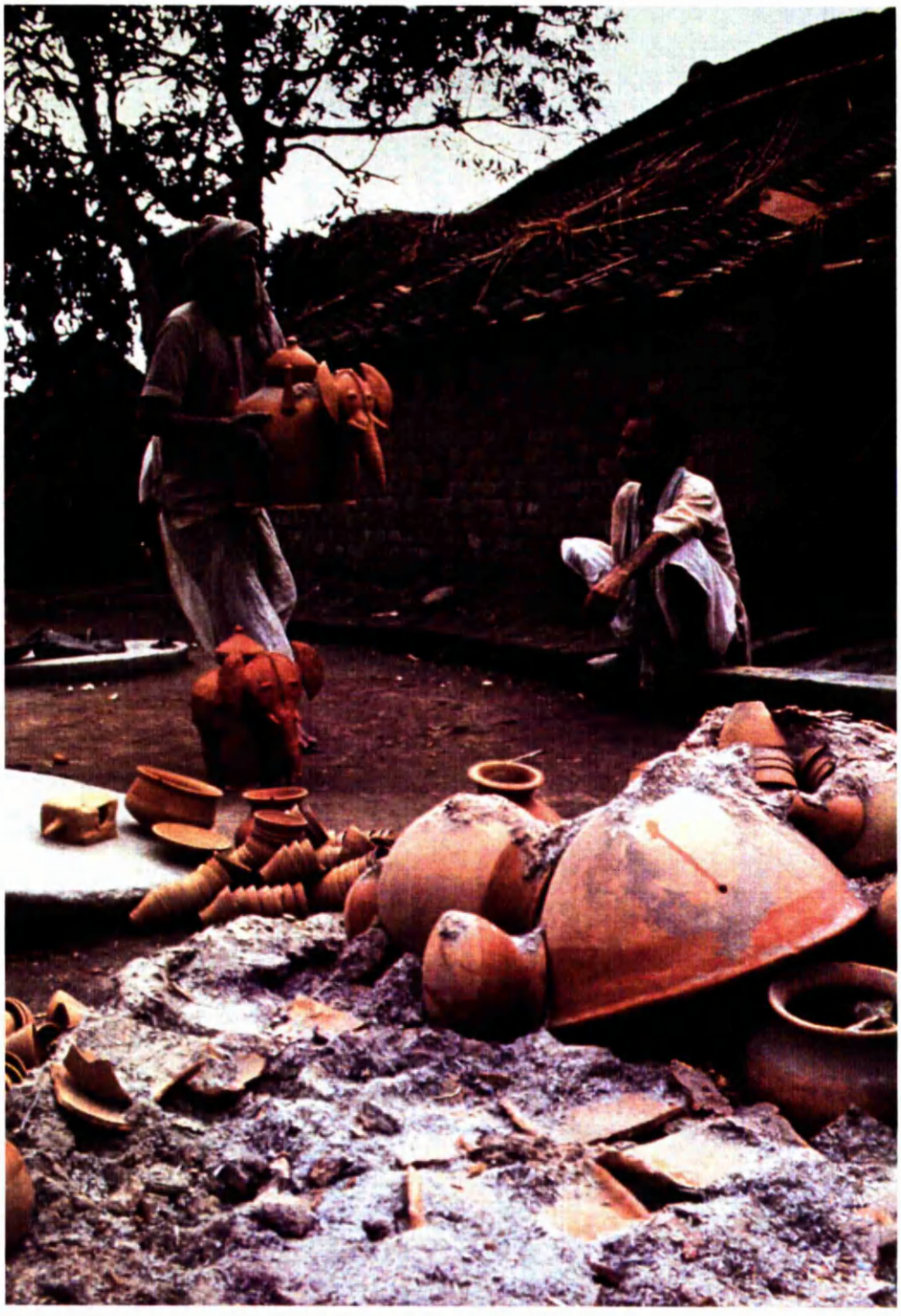

Plate 6.32) Ram Dhari himself removes the elephant sculptures from the kiln and, dusting off the ashes, checks their condition.

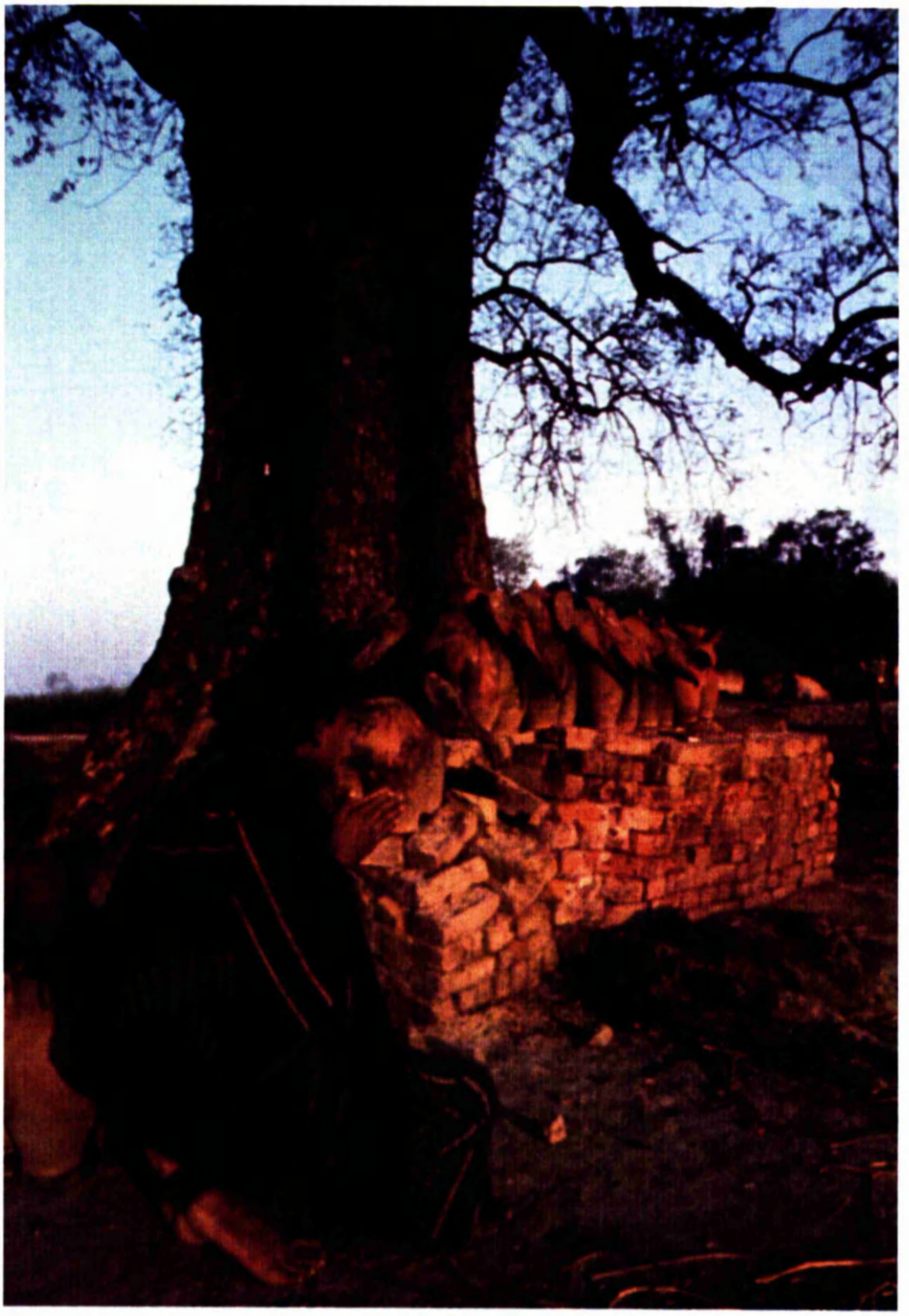

Plate 6.33) Once completed, Ram Dhari Prajapati's elephants are collected by the devotees who commissioned them and given to *Kālī-Mā* in one of her shrines, such as this one in nearby Madhavapur.

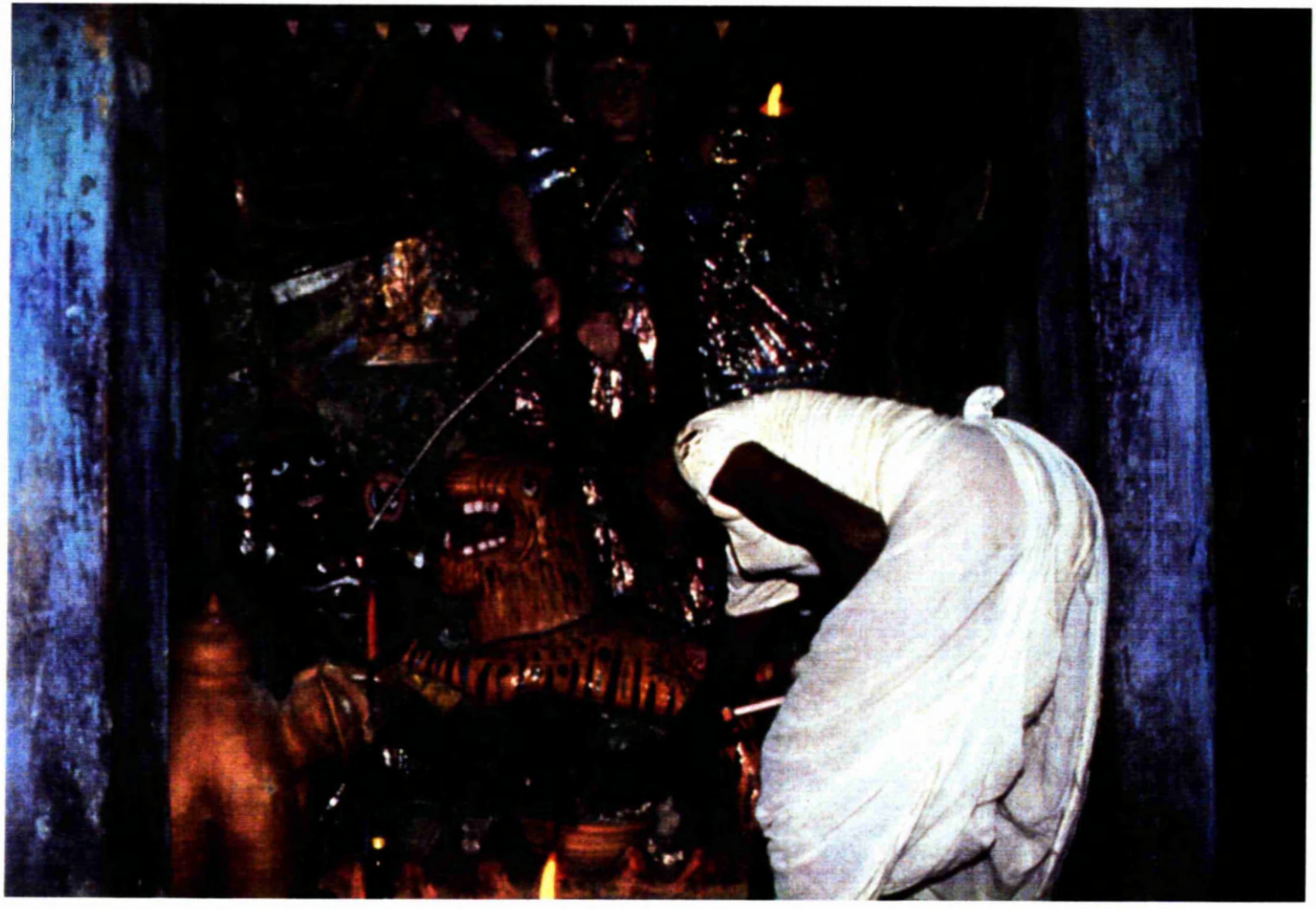

Plate 6.34) In a tiny building in Mundera, a broken votive terracotta elephant stands beneath a large stucco image of *Kālī-Mā,* depicted astride a tiger and defeating a demon (drawn directly from the classical iconography of *Mahiṣāsura Mardinī).* Before her, Sumari, the local *purohit,* lights lamps and incense in *pūjā.*

Plate 6.35) Atop Mundera's cement *Kālī-Mā* shrine, the discarded elephants given in previous years gradually disintegrate.

CHAPTER SEVEN
TULASĪ:A SURVEY AND CASE STUDY OF RITUAL TERRACOTTA PLANTERS FOR TULASĪ, THE GODDESS INCARNATE AS A BASIL BUSH, IN COASTAL ORISSA

Tulasī, or Indian basil (species: *Ocimum sanctum*[1]), has been sacred in South Asia for thousands of years. Although its sanctity may derive from a pre-Aryan cult, *tulasī* has been most commonly associated throughout history with the worship of the Aryan god *Viṣṇu*. The herb is used in many *Vaiṣṇavite* temples, but its primary function is in household rituals. Essential to the expression of individual devotion, a few leaves of *tulasī* should be ingested by every orthodox *Vaiṣṇavite* as part of daily prayers (Plate 7.1).[2]

Many legends describe *Tulasī*'s origins. In the *Samudramaṭhana*, the 'Churning of the Cosmic Ocean', the bush emerged from tumultuous waters as one of *Viṣṇu*'s essential gifts to help maintain mankind's existence.[3] A complex legend in Orissa views the plant as the fourth incarnation of the goddess.[4] In the first age, *Satya Yuga*, the goddess was known as *Satyavatī*.

Reborn in the second age (*Treta Yuga*) at the time of the *Rāmāyana* as the goddess *Candrā*, she was abducted by the odious demon *Mahirāvaṇa* (son of *Rāvaṇa*) who tried to rape her. *Candrā* was so pure and strong-willed that the demon was unable to compromise her virtue. *Hanuman* slaughtered the demon and rescued the goddess by carrying her to his lord, *Rāma*, the then-

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[1] A second species, *Ocimum album*, with a larger, pale green leaf is also grown in India, although the darker-leafed *Ocimum sanctum* is more popular and is the one generally associated with sacred rituals.

[2] It is remarkable that although *tulasī* is sacred to the daily worship of hundreds of millions of Hindus, few mentions of it appear in any religious, anthropological, sociological, or historical publications. The largest published reference, aside from a pamphlet written by Sandesara, an Ahmedabad physician) is one and a half pages in Mani's *Purānic Encyclopaedia*, pp 797-798. The field research for this chapter is comprised of surveys of *tulasī caurās* (planters) and interviews with potters and householders in Puri District, Orissa in 1979, 1980, 1988, and 1990, with invaluable assistance during the last year from Maheswar Mohapatra.

[3] Wilson p 67, Srivastava p 95, and Crooke p 412.

[4] As told to the author by Rudrapari Mohapatra, a *Brahman* from Padmapada, Puri District, Orissa.

current incarnation of *Viṣṇu*. *Rāma* was so handsome and magnificent that *Candrā* fell in love with him at first sight, while the god, overcome by *Candrā*'s unassailable purity, wanted to exalt her by bowing and touching her feet. *Rāma*, however, was married to *Sītā* (a union that became the Hindu symbol of perfection in love and fidelity), and his honour forbade him from touching any other woman. He promised *Candrā* that although they could not be together for the million years of that *yuga*, they would live together in the next. In consequence, through her love of *Rāma*, *Candrā* remained alone and a virgin for millennia

Reincarnated in the third age (*Dvāpara Yuga*) as *Pripurā*, a beautiful milkmaid, she was seduced by the sensuous cowherd-god *Kṛṣṇa* (previously *Rāma/Viṣṇu*). Although *Kṛṣṇa* had other paramours — among them the beautiful *Rādhā* — *Pripurā* was his favourite consort, and together they had many amorous adventures.

In the beginning of the fourth and present age (*Kali Yuga*), approximately 432,000 years ago, the Goddess was born as *Tulasī* (also known as *Vṛndāvatī*). This time she became the wife of an evil demon, *Jalandhar*, son of the sea and Lord of the Underworld. Although *Jalandhar* was repugnant to *Tulasī*, he was her husband, and, as a dutiful and virtuous wife, she devoted her life and all her thoughts to him. So steadfast and pure was her loyalty that its sacred power (*satī*) made the demon immortal and invulnerable. When he discovered his new invincibility, *Jalandhar* was insatiably greedy for almighty power and decided to become lord of all the worlds and master of everyone within them, earth and heavens included.[5] But

[5] A version of *Jalandhar*'s birth and his relationship to *Tulasī* was written by Maheswar Mohapatra [personal correspondence], as follows: "One day *Siva* was travelling in absence of his wife *Parvati*. *Siva* was believed to be one of the sexiest god among all the Gods and Godess. When he travelled alone he became excited and something is coming out from his body. He kept hold of all these and throw away in the ocean. Ocean is believed to be the

the ultimate control of the universe is shared by *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva*, so *Jalandhar* first challenged *Viṣṇu* to battle. Since *Viṣṇu* is not a warrior god, and was ill-equipped against so ferocious a demon, *Jalandhar* won and imprisoned the god. Next *Jalandhar* waged a great war against *Śiva*, the All-Powerful. But *Śiva* is also known as the Destroyer, so despite *Jalandhar*'s extraordinary powers, the demon was outmatched. During the battle, however, *Jalandhar* heard tales of the unsurpassed beauty of *Śiva*'s consort, *Parvati*, and decided he had to have her. Leaving his demon lieutenants to continue the fruitless war, *Jalandhar* disguised himself as *Śiva* and slipped away to Mount *Kailasa*. *Parvati*, thinking she saw her husband arriving, rushed out of her palace to embrace him, but her beauty was so radiant that before they met, *Jalandhar* fell to the ground unconscious. Meanwhile, the imprisoned *Viṣṇu* heard rumours that the secret of *Jalandhar*'s strength was the unquestioning loyalty (*satī*) of his wife, *Tulasī*. If this was true, then he (*Viṣṇu*) calculated that he could undermine the demon by using *Jalandhar*'s own devious tactics. Assuming the demon's shape, *Viṣṇu* escaped from his prison and travelled to *Jalandhar*'s underworld palace, where *Tulasī*, upon seeing the being she assumed to be her husband, immediately kissed him. The embrace of *Viṣṇu* is legendary, irresistible to any woman, and *Tulasī* fell helplessly in love with the god. With *Tulasī*'s unwavering dedication to her husband compromised,

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father of Godess *Laxmi* who is known as Goddess of Wealth. When he throw it into the water a child is born and started weeping. Then *Brahma* came and asked the child for the reason. The child told he is in need of food. When food was provided he became kept quiet. *Brahma* took care of the child. After some years the child became furious. Because he had the character of demons. In our language water means "*Jala*". From '*Jala*' he took birth so his name becomes '*Jalandhar*'. He looks handsome and married a beautiful girl named '*Vrindavatti*' (another name for *Tulasi*). *Vrindavatti* was the daughter of a king, who ruled over the then northern India. You might have heard about the word "*Sati*". This means a girl once married to a boy never turn to look others. She devoted all part of his life towards her husband. If the husband dies she gave her life in the funereal fire of her husband which happens recently in 'Rajsthan' (sic). ...Hindu Mythology believes in seven "*Satis*" in ancient times. So each Hindu while wokeup in morning utter the names of these *Satis*. So "*Vrindavatti*" is one of them. So by her virtue her husband was safe. As her husband was a demon by nature he tried to conquer all over the world."

Jalandhar lost his immortality and invulnerability and was destroyed by *Śiva*. *Tulasī* was overcome with shame, believing her honour to be lost, but *Viṣṇu* decreed that her devotion had been celestial and sublime, even in the face of a contemptible union. He admitted that her change of allegiance came about not by her own weakness but through the overpowering machinations of a supreme deity, and she was blameless. Declaring that she should forever stand as the prototype of feminine virtue for all creation, gods and men alike, *Viṣṇu* transformed *Tulasī* into a basil bush to be worshipped morning and evening by men and women in every household in the world.

Another legend ascribes this transformation to a vicious curse levied at *Laksmī* by *Saraswatī* in which *Laksmī* was forced to live on earth forever as a plant.[6] Other myths maintain that when *Tulasī* found herself transformed into a bush, she cursed *Viṣṇu* and turned him into a small black stone (*śālagrāma*) to be kept at her roots, thereby ensuring that the two would stay together for the remaining hundreds of thousands of years in this *yuga*.[7] The

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[6] The following synopsis of the story from the ninth *Skandha* of the *Devī Bhāgavata* is given in Mani [p 797]: "*Sarasvatī, Gaṅgā* and *Lakṣmī* were all, in the beginning, wives of *MahaViṣṇu*. The Lord loved all the three equally. One day all the four were sitting together when *Gaṅgā* sent lustful glances at *Viṣṇu* which was immediately noticed by both *Sarasvatī* and *Lakṣmī*. *Sarasvatī* got angry and rising up caught hold of the hair of *Gaṅgā* and dragged her to the ground. *Lakṣmī* then caught hold of *Sarasvatī* to prevent further assault but *Sarasvatī* then poured all her rage on *Lakṣmī* and cursed her to be born as a plant on earth. *Gaṅgādevī* could not bear this and she cursed *Sarasvatī* to be born as a river on earth. *Sarasvatī* retorted with a curse that *Gaṅgā* also would be born as a river. When the whole tumult was over *Viṣṇu* called *Lakṣmī* to his side and said — "Oh *Devi*, do not worry. Things have happened as predestined. You go and be born as the daughter of *Dharmadhvaja* and grow up there. From there by divine grace you will be transformed into a plant sacred enough to make all the three worlds pure. That plant will be named *Tulasī*. When you will be thus living as *Tulasī*, a demon named *Śaṅkhacūḍa* with part of my virile strength will be born and he will marry you. Then you can come back to me. The holy river *Padmāvatī* will also be another form of your spirit." The story of *Tulasī*'s marriage to *Śaṅkhacūḍa* is in some ways parallel to that of *Tulasī* and *Jalandhar*, descibed above, with *Viṣṇu* taking the form of *Śaṅkhacūḍa* to deceive *Tulasī* and have sex with her, thus compromising her virtue, disabling *Śaṅkhacūḍa* , and enabling *Śiva* to kill the demon. *Tulasī* is then released to join *Viṣnu* as his wife in *Vaikuṇtha*, leaving her corporal body behind to "decay and become a holy river named *Gaṇḍakī*; your hair will become *tulasī* plant, the leaves of which will be held sacred in all the three worlds [ibid. p 798]." The goddess *Tulasī* is described [Śrivastava p 95] as "of dark complexion, with eyes resembling the petals of the lotus flower, and having four arms; of the four hands two are in the *abhaya* and *varada* poses and the other ones hold a lotus and a *nīlotpada*. She is to be adorned with *kirīṭa, hara, padmāsana* (over a lotus)."

[7] Srivastava p 95

śālagrāma, a type of ammonite, represents the male counterpart of the female *tulasī* bush and symbolises *Viṣṇu* in household shrines throughout India.[8] On *Tulasīvivāha*, a festival on the eleventh night of *Kārtika* [9], many *Vaiṣṇavite* families hold a ceremony in which *Tulasī* is married to *Viṣṇu*. Conducted, as are all Hindu weddings, by a priest before the sacred fire, this marriage joins the family's *tulasī* bush with its precious *śālagrāma* stone.[10] Superstition states that a man who removes a *śālagrāma* from the roots of his *tulasī* bush will soon be deserted by his wife and will remain alone in

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[8] Further in the *Devī Bhāgavata*, *Skandha* 9, as *Laksmī* was about to be changed into *Tulasī*, *Viṣṇu* told her: "Look! *Laksmī* ! You will live in the world as a holy basil and when the curse has been completed you will come back to me. On that day, a river named *Gaṇḍakī* will start from your body which will be in the shape of the holy basil plant. On the bank of that river, I will remain as a stone image. There will be so many worms with strong tusks and teeth, which will pierce the stone into the shape of *Sudarśana cakra* (the weapon of *Viṣṇu*) and will create numberless *śālagrāmas*. The *śālagrāmas* thus made, will be of various sizes and shapes [Mani p 672]." Another legend of the origin of śālagrāma is given in Narayanan pp 64-66.

[9] Stutley p 306. This festival marks the day in which *Viṣṇu* arises from his long sleep (*devotthāna* or *prabhodhini* [Vaudeville p 3]. Refering to the honouring of this occasion, called *Prabodhini Ekādaśī* in Nathdwara, Ambalal [p 33] writes: "This day commemorates the awakening of *Vishnu* by the gods from four months of deep slumber. A *mandapa* of sugarcane is erected in the *Doltibari*, where the marriage of a *shalagrama*, a round black stone, symbolic of *Vishnu*, with *Tulasi*, the sacred basil plant, is celebrated. The *shalagrama* is bathed with *panchamrita*, a mixture of ghee, honey, sugar and curd." (Mani [p 267] describes *Ekādaśī Vrata* for providing food during a time of hunger.)

[10] According to Crooke [p 413]: "In one story *Tulasi* was a young girl who practiced austerities in the hope that *Vishnu* would take her to wife. But *Lakshmi*, her (sic) real consort, cursed her and changed her into the plant. But *Vishnu* consoled her by promising that he would be the *śālagrāma* ammonite and remain always beside her. Accordingly both of them are annually married. This is done on the bright 11th of *Kārttik* (October-November). In Gujarat a childless pair act as parents of the bride, and a friend brings the ammonite, and with his wife acts as those of the bridegroom. The rites are done in the orthodox way. The owner of the plant presents jewels to the stone, the owner of which and his wife receive gifts as representing the bridegroom. ...The *Tulasi* is often planted on the top of a little masonry pillar near the house, when women tend it and pour over it the water in which *Vishnu*'s ammonite has been bathed." Quoting M.A. Canny, Chatterjee [p 57] wrote: "*Salagram* is God and ...*Tulsi* plant is goddess, and in some parts of India the *Tulsi* is married annually to the *salagram*. To indicate this union a *salagram* stone is handed down from father to son as a precious heirloom. Even the water in which they have been washed is precious." Elsewhere Crooke [p 64] discusses the relationship of both symbols to the dedication of a new well before water can be used for drinking or irrigation. He comments that: "before the water acquires fertilizing power the *śālagrāma*, or anchorite representing *Vishnu*, is solemnly wed to the holy basil plant or *Tulasi* (Ocymum sanctum) representing the garden which the well is intended to water. ...The customary ritual of such marriages is that the relatives of the owner assemble as in the case of a marriage in the family, the owner personates the husband and a kinsman or kinswoman the wife, gifts are given to *Brahmans*, a feast is held in the garden, and thus the water acquries fertilizing power, and it may be used without danger."
Wadley [Shakti: Power in the Conceptual Structure of Karimpur Religion, p 161] briefly describes a *pūjā* and *vrata* in Central Uttar Pradesh called *Kārtik Purāṇamasi* in which women fast and do *puja* to the *tulasī* bushes, which are seen as representing *Viṣṇu*.

every successive reincarnation.[11] It is believed that the 'pollution' caused by inadvertently breaking a taboo, particularly one concerned with pregnant women, may be cleansed by a ritual bathing with water in which *tulasī* leaves have been steeped.[12] Legend also states that the messengers of *Yama*, the God of Death, will not be able to enter a house containing a fresh sprig of *tulasī*. Accordingly, funeral pyres in some areas contain *tulasī* wood to protect the spirit of the dead.[13]

Aside from its religious merits, *tulasī* has been praised in Indian scriptures and lore since the time of the early *Vedas* as an herb that cures blood and skin diseases.[14] Ancient treatises extol its properties as an antidote for poisons, a curative for kidney disease and arthritis, a preventative for mosquito and insect bites, and a purifier of polluted air.[15] Generally prepared in medicinal teas and poultices, *tulasī*'s widespread contemporary use in India as a beneficial aid to both internal and external

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[11] Chatterjee p 57.

[12] Behura p 83. A translation of the *Devī Bhāgavata* 9.25.41-43 by Sandesara [p 11] states: "*Tulasi*, the Holy Basil is best amongst flowers, is pure, sanctifying and attractive to the mind and is capable of destroying the heap of sins like the burning flame to the firewood. It is said in the *Vedas* that no flower can be compared with the Holy Basil. It is sacred in all States and is known as *Tulasi*. She is to be held over the head in veneration, is desired by all and is sanctifying the world. I bow to her who is liberated while living and is capable of conferring liberation from rebirth and devotion to the Lord."

[13] Stutley p 306. Chapter 24 of the *Padma Purāṇa* [quoted in Mani p 798] states: "The soul of a dead one whose dead body is cremated using *Tulasī*'s twigs for firewood would attain a permanent place in *Viṣṇuloka*. Even great sinners would be absolved of their sins if their dead bodies are cremated with *Tulasī* twigs. If at the time of death one thinks of God and mutters His name and if his dead body is later cremated with *Tulasī* twigs, he would have no rebirths. Even he who has done a *crore* of sins would attain *mokṣa* if at the time of cremating his dead body a piece of *Tulasī* twig is placed at the bottom of the funeral pyre. Just as all waters become pure by the union with *Gaṅga* water, all firewood is made pure by the addition of a small piece of *Tulasī* twig. If the dead body of one is cremated using *Tulasī* twigs alone, one's sins for a *crore* of *Kalpa* years would be washed away. *Yamadūtas* would keep away from one whose dead body is cremated with *Tulasī* twigs and servants of *Viṣṇu* would come near. If a light is burnt for *Viṣṇu* with a *Tulasī* stick it would be equal to burning several *lākhs* of lights for *Viṣṇu*. If one makes the *Tulasī* leaves into a paste and smears it on one's body and then worships *Viṣṇu* for one day, one would be getting the benefit of a hundred ordinary worships and also the benefit of doing a hundred *godanas* (gifts of cows)."

[14] According to Sandesara [p 2]: "In *Ayurveda* it (*tulasi*)is considered to destroy *Vat* and *Kafa* and anti-poisonous and capable of removing blood dyscrasias, Leucoderma, skin maladies, dysuria, pain in the ribs, etc."

[15] Stutley p 306.

organs suggests that these timeless traditions are based upon practical efficacy.[16]

Integral to *Vaiṣṇavite* households throughout South Asia, *tulasī* usually is contained within some kind of planter, although occasionally it is grown directly in the earth. Most *tulasī* containers are simple, unadorned terracotta pots, their shapes depending upon local style[17], while others may be constructed of brick or mounded mud (Plates 7.2 & 7.3). Each *tulasī* planter is treated as a household shrine and stands in a prominent place within the home — for example, in front of the main entrance, on the outside verandah, or perhaps in the centre of the interior courtyard. In 1672, an Italian traveller, Vincenza P. Maria, described them: "Almost all the Hindus... adore a plant like our *Basilico gentile*, but of a more pungent odour.... Every one before his house has a little altar, girt with a wall half an *ell* high, in the middle of which they erect certain pedestals like little towers, and in these the shrub is grown. They recite their prayers daily before it, with repeated prostrations, sprinklings of water, &c. There are also many of these maintained at the bathing places, and in the courts of the pagodas."[18]

The reverent attitudes of worshippers have engendered the production and use of sculpted terracotta *tulasī* planters in a few regions. Potters in Goa and Karnataka, on India's west coast, create elaborate and often brightly

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[16] A full description of the healing properties of *tulasī* may be found in Sandesara pp 2-9 & 27-31. Basil has also been a popular herbal medicine in Mediterranean countries throughout history, and today it is commonly used in the preparation of herbal teas and remedies in Europe. Eastern Christian lore states that basil grew upon Jesus Christ's grave, and, on St. Basil's Day, Greek women take basil sprigs to be blessed in their churches before placing them in their homes to ensure good fortune in the coming year. Yule, Col. Henry, and A.C. Burnell. *Hobson-Jobson.* Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1986, p. 931.

[17] Cort ["Temple Potters of Puri", p 35] documented that the clay pots which had been used for cooking *mahāprasād* for the *Jagannāth* Temple are often taken to use as containers for *tulasī* plants. In the beginniing of *Asadha* (mid-June) thousands of *Vaiṣnavite* devotees walk in procession thirty kilometres from Alandi to a *Tukarām Melā* in Pandapur, Maharashtra, carrying on their heads terracotta pots containing *tulasī* plants.

[18] "Il Viaggio all' Indie Orientali del P." Procuratore Generale de' Carmelitani Scalzi. Folio Roma, 1672, p. 300; as quoted Hobson-Jobson p 931.

polychromed *tulasī* pots whose moulded sides depict the *avatārs* of *Viṣṇu* and/or other *Vaiṣṇavite* symbols (Plates 7.4, 7.5, & 7.6). In West Bengal, tall terracotta planters echo the shapes of the ancient sculpted brick temples in their vicinity (Plates 7.7 & 7.8). In contrast, nontribal potters accept commissions from the *Kondhs*, a Hinduized tribe in the mountains of Orissa, to sculpt planters in the shape of the goddess herself, carrying on her head a pot to contain the sacred bush (Plate 7.9). These planters echo the coastal Orissan forms of cement, laterite, terracotta, or stucco planters called *Vṛndāvattī* (another name of the goddess *Tulasī*) (Plates 7.10). Most magnificent of all are the large *tulasī caurās* (planters) designed in coastal Orissa as miniature temples for the goddess, reflecting in their forms the architecture of nearby sacred monuments (Plate 7.11). The simplest example stands outside a farmer's house Jogeshwarapura, Puri District (Plate 7.12), its 60 mm (two foot) high dome decorated only with four stick figures representing the *mandiracāruni* (the guardians of the four directions). (See also Plate 7.13) Far more ornate is the 1200 mm (four foot) high tiered *tulasī caurā* adorned with adorsed lions, *mandiracāruni*, a horserider (representing *Sūrya*), several devotees, elephants, and rows of decorative reliefs — a focus for daily worship of a *Brāhman* family in Padmapoda, Puri District (Plate 7.14).[19] This chapter is devoted to a case study of the production and use of these planters in one Orissan village.

Dibakar Muduli is an *Oriya Kumbhāra* living in the village of Balikondalo, Puri District, Orissa. Born in 1954, he was married at the age of twenty to Kuntali, a woman of the same age from a nearby village. They have

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[19] *Tulasī caurās* were documented also in Jaganathpura, Oraputta, Begunian, Aludundapatna, Gop, and Konarak. The only published reference to an Orissan *tulasī* planter, other than that by Huyler ["Folk Art In India Today", p 200 and "Terracotta Traditions in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century India" p 60] is a one sentence mention in Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy p 201.

three children, two boys and a girl, who were seventeen, fourteen, and ten, respectively, in 1990. Seven other relatives (Dibakar's mother, brother, sister-in-law, and their four children) live with them in their small house. Like the homes of other potters in their village, Dibakar's house is constructed of mud walls roofed with a gable fretwork of wood and bamboo beams upon which the broad leaves of fantail palms support sheaves of hay. This easily replaceable thatch is practical in an area where frequent destruction from cyclones would make other forms of roofing unaffordable. On the outside front wall under the eaves is a narrow verandah where family members frequently sit to gossip with neighbours. Two doors pierce this verandah: One opens into a narrow passageway to the inner courtyard, and the other, just alongside the first, leads into the cow stable and grain-milling/storage room, which takes up the entire front of the house. The courtyard, where much of the family activity occurs, particularly during the long annual monsoons, is also surrounded by a raised and eave-covered verandah, from which radiate three living/bedrooms and a monsoon kitchen. During the dry months, most of the cooking takes place on a clay stove at one edge of the courtyard. Usually scattered around the stove are cooking pots, drying vegetables, and freshly winnowed rice. Built into the wall of one of the bedrooms is a small shrine to the household gods, *Rudrapāl, Ratnaswari, Lakṣmī, Kālī,* and *Durgā,* which is regularly attended by Dibakar's mother, wife, and sister-in-law. The family of Dibakar's first cousin lives in a similar house semi-detached to one side, and the families share a workshop and kiln area behind their houses.[20] They also share the use of a large and elaborately sculpted family *tulasī caurā* , which stands in a small cleared area across the narrow lane from their front doors (see Plates 7.39 through 7.42).

[20] Behura [p 45] refers to the common joint owning and collective firing of kilns in Orissa.

Seventy-two families of *Muduli Kumbhāras* live in Balikondalo — a large majority of the village population of 1,090 in 1990 (Plate 7.15). Within this century, a greatly increased local population and a decreased demand for terracotta vessels have meant that many members of these families are not involved with potterymaking or sculpting. Some *Muduli Kumbhāras* work in factories or as labourers in nearby towns or cities, but most farm the lands around the village. Balikondalo is set amid extensive rice paddies and sugarcane fields, most of which are owned by the six *Brāhman* families in the community. While many of Dibakar's relatives and neighbours share-crop these lands, others, such as Dibakar himself, negotiate with the *Brāhmans* for produce and for the use of land as a part of *jajmānī* (called *badli* in *Oriya*). Besides these two prominent castes, the village also contains six families of *Behera* (dairymen), two of *Khoibata* (fishermen), one of *Dhobe* (washermen), and, on the outskirts, one family of *Harijan Domo* (basketmakers).

Unlike most of India, Orissa benefits from two annual monsoons, and farmers are able to grow two or three crops each year. The production of pottery is seasonal, with its peak from November until May. Between June and October, the weather is too unpredictable for potterymaking to be profitable, and Dibakar and his brother spend most of their time farming.[21] They cultivate rice, sugarcane, and a continuous supply of fresh vegetables. They also own several coconut palms, as do each of the other families, and Dibakar takes pride that between bartering and farming he never needs to

[21] Observations in Balikondalo are corroborated by Behura [p 46], who noted in his survey of potters throughout Orissa that pottery "is carried out in full swing from November to May; and the months from June to October constitute lean period for potters. During the lean period potters resort to agriculture or agricultural labour. The potters who possess land till their own; and those who have got resources to cultivate but have no land till the land of others on share-cropping basis or as tenants. And those potters who have got neither land nor resources turn to agricultural labour. The potters engaged in agriculture, find support from it for their subsistence for two to eight months in a year; during the other months they make up from pottery. Hence the potters are steadfastly attached to land."

purchase food. Rice is their staple, supplemented by *dāl* and vegetable curries; but Dibakar's family is nonvegetarian, and their favourite meal is spicy curry that Kuntali prepares with fish caught in local streams or in the nearby Bay of Bengal.

The main highway is only one kilometre from Balikondalo, connecting the famous sun temple at Konarak (twelve kilometres away) with Orissa's capital city of Bhubaneshwar (fifty-six kilometres away) and the temple city of Puri (forty-nine kilometres away). Five other villages surround Balikondalo within a radius of four kilometres, while the nearest market town of Gop is only four kilometres away. Dibakar divides his pottery production between *badli* and market sales. He said, "In my family, we have enough work. No men need to go outside the village for jobs; none have left. Some of my cousins work here as cultivators, but the demand for my pottery is steady. Through the *badli* system, I supply many customers who have been established clients of my family for generations. Otherwise, I sell my pottery in weekly and daily markets up to a radius of twenty kilometres from this place."

Dibakar Muduli's income, supplemented by that of his brother, is enough to support his family. Through *badli* he receives rice, beans, chillies, vegetables, fruit, cloth, and wooden tools. In 1990, he said his annual income from sales averaged 8,200 rupees (£273/33 or $455.55).[22] Extracting a small service fee, one of his relatives regularly collects vessels from Dibakar and others in the village to sell in the markets at Gop and Konarak. For a pot measuring approximately 150 by 150 mm (6 by 6 inches), Dibakar will receive two rupees (6.6 pence or 11 cents); a pot 200 by 250 mm (8 by 10 inches), three rupees (9.9 pence or 16.5 cents); and a pot 400 by 400 mm (16 by 16 inches),

[22] It is difficult to elicit exact income figures from rural Indians, who are naturally suspicious of outside surveyors, and the amounts are almost impossible to estimate.

four rupees (13.2 pence or 22 cents). Besides constructing planters, he also sculpts terracotta horses, which are given to the mother goddess, as described in Chapter Four. Making them on commission, Dibakar earns three rupees (9.9 pence or 16.5 cents) for a dowel horse 125 mm (5 inches) high (see Plate 4.11) to twenty rupees (67 pence or $1.11) for a hollow one 400 mm (16 inches) high. He said, "*Tulasī caurās* sell well, particularly during the months of *Baisākha* (April-May), *Kārtika* (October-November), and *Māgha* (January-February). Depending upon the size and decoration, we are able to sell them for 75 to 175 rupees each (£2/50p to £5/83p or $4.16 to $9.72). That makes our income much higher during those months."[23]

Dibakar went to school only up to the fifth standard (grade), after which he began to spend all his time learning the trade and helping around the workshop. When his father died in 1974, Dibakar assumed his full duties as a potter, and his business has grown since then. "My family has been practicing potterymaking in this village for many hundreds of years. I learned this trade from my father and uncle. As a young boy, I spent several years learning how to make vessels and sculptures, just as I am now teaching my son, Prabhakar. It took me many years to be able to make *tulasī caurās* of the quality that I wanted." Only Dibakar and, now, his son work on the wheel. Kuntali, who came from a family who were also potters, helps beat the vessels into shape and sometimes makes lamps by hand. "The pots we supply are always undecorated. If our customers wish to paint a pot for a special ceremony, they do that themselves according to their own customs."

Once a year in the month of *Margasirā* (November-December), Dibakar and the other *Muduli Kumbharas* in Balikondalo stop all work (potting,

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[23] Exchange based upon 1990 rates.

farming, and manual labour) to celebrate the five-day festival of *Kurala Pañcami*. *Cak Pūjā* (worship of the wheels and all the other tools used in potterymaking and sculpting) is the major focus of the festival. (A detailed description of the *Cak Pūjā* conducted by Dibakar and his family appears in Chapter Two.) Just prior to the festival, the women in Dibakar's family resurface all the exterior and courtyard walls of their house with a thin layer of mud. Then, dipping the fingers of their right hands in rice paste, they paint *citra* (white designs of lotuses, elephants, peacocks, and trees) on the walls (Plate 7.16). This custom of painting wall murals is common to rural households throughout this part of Orissa on all important occasions, and the women of each community compete with one another to produce the finest work (Plate 7.17). The paintings beautify the home in order to entice the goddess into protecting its inhabitants; intentionally ephemeral, they begin to wear off within a few days.

At community gatherings during *Kurala Pañcami*, village storytellers recite favourite tales from the epics and Orissan legends, and local musicians play far into the night. Aside from honouring each potter's personal tools, the *Muduli Kumbharas* worship their first ancestor and tutelary deity, *Rudrapāl* (whose mythology resembles that of *Prajāpati* among potters elsewhere). Although the *Muduli Kumbhāras* are just one of many subcastes of potters in Orissa, they believe that their potting and sculpting techniques — and, consequently, their products — were given by *Viṣṇu* to them alone and are far superior to those of other groups.[24] Dibakar's family prays to *Rudrapāl* each morning and evening of the five-day festival, conducting elaborate rituals to praise his wonders. On the final day, Dibakar throws on his wheel miniature

[24] Behura [p 7] points out that each kinship group of potters in Orissa has similar beliefs in its own superiority over the others.

vessels, which are then filled with offerings and given to the god in that evening's *pūjā*.[25]

The process of creating a *tulasī caurā* begins with a visit from the devotee who requires it. Dibakar is one of five Balikondalo potters whose planters are in regular demand. He commented, "My *caurās* are ordered by people from many villages up to a radius of about fifteen kilometres from this place. They come to me with their order and place a deposit. As it is a sacred vessel, usually they also bring a gift of some flowers and fruit. Together we decide on the size of the vessel they require and we discuss what sort of decoration it may have.... Usually they give me the choice as to what exactly I decide to put on it."

Varying in height from 400 mm to 1.2 m (16 inches to 4 feet), the planters that Dibakar makes regularly are all constructed using virtually the same procedure. The following describes his sculpting of a *tulasī caurā* 1.7 m (3 1/2 feet) high (Plates 7.18 through 7.36).

Each day's work begins with a small *pūjā* to the wheel, in which Dibakar lights a stick of incense and prays to the spirit of *Rudrapāl*, asking

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[25] Describing *Kurala Pañcami*, Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [p 193] quoted an *Oriya* potter, Gautam Chandra Bahera, as saying: "Am Tag des *kurala panchami*-Festes stellen alle Töpfer ihre Arbeit ein. Das ist Festzeit. Wie lange man feiert, ist nicht festgelegt. Man kann das Fest bis zu einer Woche oder gar einem Monat ausstrecken. Das ist Sache des Glaubens. Bei diesem Fest verehren wir die Drehscheibe, das andere Werkzeug und den Brennplatz. Am letzten Tag des Festes gehen wir zu einem Teich und verehren dort den Ton. Zwei Figuren von *Visvakarma* werden auch verehrt." Translated into English, he states: "On the day of the *Kurala Pancami* festival all the potters leave their work. It is festival time. How long they celebrate is not fixed. The festival can be extended to a week or a month. It is a matter of belief. At this festival we venerate the potter's wheel, the other tools, and the kiln. On the last day of the festival we go to a pond and there worship the clay. Two figures of *Visvakarma* are also worshipped." A detailed account of *Kurala Panchami* appears in Behura pp 265-67. He comments: "Some well-to-do potter families, who celebrate the festival a bit ostentatiously, engage *Brahman* priests for propitiation of the deity in accordance with the *Brahmanical* tradition, but like others their pottery wheels, other tools and kilns are worshipped by the eldest male member. Daily two rounds of offerings, one in the forenoon and the other in the evening, are made both for the deity and fetishes all through the festival. The eldest male member of the family is not supposed to take any food until the first offering of the day is over; otherwise, it is believed that some mishap may befall the family."

for his guidance.[26] Next, he prepares the clay needed for the day. For *tulasī caurās*, Dibakar mixes five parts raw clay with two parts fine sand and one part cow manure. In order to guarantee a thorough mixture, the potter first kneads the clay with his hands, removing any stones, sticks, or impurities, and then finishes kneading it with his feet (Plates 7. 18 and &. 7. 19). To create this *caurā* , after clearing an area of compacted ground in front of his workshop, Dibakar pours a thin layer of fine dry sand into a ring 75 mm (3 inches) wide and one metre (40 inches) in diameter to prevent the wet clay of the pot from bonding to the dirt (Plate 7.20). Then he places a rope of clay — 50 mm (2 inches) thick — upon the sand, connecting its ends together to form a circular base for the *caurā* . Next he adds more ropes of clay, one upon the other, gradually building up the vessel wall by joining the coils with large pinches (Plate 7.21). As the wall heightens, Dibakar shortens the length of each successive ring so that the base begins to taper inwards (Plate 7.22). When the full height of the first tier (called *mūla caurā*) is reached, the potter stops work and allows it to dry overnight. Since planters are only one of Dibakar's many products, he busies himself with other projects between stages of sculpting. He has a regular demand for the seventy-five varieties of vessels required by local inhabitants for household and ritual use. Besides these pots, plates, and lamps, he makes and fires large terracotta rings — each approximately 50 to 75 mm (2 to 3 inches) thick, 300 mm (12 inches)

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[26] Louise Cort ["Temple Potters of Puri", p 39] documented a similar daily ritual in Puri: "The main activity of the potters' *puja* is to purify and worship the workshop, the kiln, the wheel, and the other tools. But a reverent attitude toward their workspace prevails throughout the year. Their wheels and tools, gifts of *Viṣṇu*, are worshipped at the start and finish of each workday, by laying a flower on the wheel or by touching the paddle to the forehead. The potters believe that their workshop is the 'abode of *Viṣnu*,' wherein all castes are equal ... Potters do not enter their workshop when they consider themselves to be polluted by a birth or death within the family. Before unloading their kiln, whose fire has purified their pots, they bathe and pray."

high, and 1.22 m (4 feet) in diameter — which are joined together to line the wells in all the neighbourhood villages.)

On the second day, when the 430 mm (17-inch) high base has dried to a leather-hard stage, Dibakar begins to beat the pot walls. Holding a *pindo* (stone anvil) on the inside with his left hand, he smooths, strengthens, and shapes the clay on the outside by pounding it with a *pitna* (wooden mallet) (Plate 7.23). He then closes off the top of the base with clay and, using additional coils, builds up a short second tier (*dadhinauti*) (Plate 7.24). Covering the existing vessel with a damp gunnysack to prevent cracking, he allows it to dry overnight again.

Decoration and sculpting begin on the third day, when Dibakar adds a fluted edge to the *dadhinauti* (Plate 7.25) and applies vertical strips of clay to the base to delineate four separate sections (Plates 7.26 & 7.27). In a painstaking process that takes three days to complete, relief sculptures are applied within each section. Each *tulasī caurā* is unique, some simple, others complex. He commented: "Sometimes my customer will ask me to make some special decorations on the *caurā* , such as Lord *Jagannāth*, *Balabhādra*, and *Subhadra*, and I will do that. Most times I just do what seems right to me, like with this *caurā* I am making now." Dibakar chooses decorations from a wide variety of symbols, figures, and designs, including *Vaiṣṇavite avatārs* and associate deities, mythological beings, local heroes, warriors, erotic couples, devotees, horses, elephants, cows, flowers, trees, suns, moons, and stars. For this planter, Dibakar decides to sculpt two pairs of musicians, one devotional couple, and one horseman, each with its own accompanying symbols. Unlike the relief sculptures from Molela, Rajasthan, described in Chapter Four, these figures are not hollow; rather, they are solid and sculpted directly onto the clay. On the afternoon of the third day, several hours are

spent on the first panel, sculpting with small balls and pinches of clay a horse and rider standing below the sun, to represent the sun god, *Sūrya* (Plate 7.28). (The nearby temple of Konarak is dedicated to *Sūrya*, and many local villages regard this god as their patron deity.) On the morning of the fourth day, Dibakar works on the second panel modeling a drummer and a flutist beneath a canopy of stars; later that day, he completes the third panel to portray a drummer and a cymbal player surmounted by a half moon (Plate 7.29). He said, "These musicians represent the great celebrations that we have here to honour our goddess, *Tulasī*." Early on the fifth day, Dibakar begins to sculpt the last panel, on which two devotees, representing the couple who commissioned the *caurā* , are shown respectfully with their hands raised above their heads in prayer. Above them the sun is symbolic of light and a protected future (Plate 7.30).

Dibakar's fourteen-year-old son, Prabhakar, helps him finish the decorations for this *tulasī caurā* (Plate 7.31). Dibakar commented, "Only slowly I am letting my son help me with my sculpting work. He is not yet able to make a full *caurā* himself, but, by watching me and helping me with some of the small details, he will learn the techniques." To the neck between the first and second tiers, they add four simplified forms of *Narasiṁha*, intended to guard the four directions (Plate 7.32). On top of the second tier, Dibakar adds coils to form another *dadhinauti* in the shape of a simple pot.

Until this point, the entire vessel has been built and sculpted by hand. The bowl that forms the final tier (*dali caurā*) of the planter, and that will actually contain the roots of the *tulasī* bush, is thrown by Dibakar on his wheel on the afternoon of the fifth day (Plate 7.33). This wheel, constructed of clay and straw upon a fretwork of wood, weighs approximately fifty kilograms (110 lbs.) and, once propelled by its stick, spins on its attached pivot for eight

to ten minutes before requiring additional propulsion.[27] During an average spin, Dibakar can throw ten to twenty medium-sized pots. This simple *dali caurā* , made in less than a minute, is put aside while he throws a series of water pots. Returning to his planter, he attaches the new bowl to the third tier by adding strips of clay and smoothing them together. Prabhakar helps Dibakar to crimp the top edges of the bowl (Plate 7.34), and on the side of the third tier, directly above each of the four lower bas-reliefs, they add a sun cradled in a crescent moon. The *tulasī caurā* , its construction and decorations complete (Plates 7.35 & 7.36), is then covered by a temporary awning of coconut-palm fronds and allowed to dry for fifteen days in the shade. Dibakar said, "We must make sure that the *caurā* is completely dry before we can let it be fired. Improper drying would surely make it crack or split in the kiln."

The firing of *tulasī caurā s* takes place only when enough household vessels are finished to fill an entire kiln (*ava*).[28] (In an average year, Dibakar constructs twenty planters on commission (Plate 7.37). Dibakar, his brother, and his paternal cousins share a permanent kiln that stands in a covered shed behind the workshop. Built like a large horseshoe with walls of brick reinforced with mud, the kiln is 1.83 m (6 feet) deep, 1.525 m (5 feet) wide, and 1.22 m (4 feet) high at its opening, decreasing to a height of 610 mm (2 feet) at the back. Depending upon the sizes of the vessels, one firing can hold

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[27] Behura [pp 127-128] documented that generally in Orissa: "The approximate weight of a wheel varies from 37 kg. to 74 kg. Once fully accelerated, the wheel maintains its momentum for about 8 to 10 minutes so as to complete a small pot; and if the momentum slows down before the completion of the pot, the thrower uses his hands or turning stick agian. Once momentum is obtained, a heavier wheel revolves for a longer duration in comparison to a lighter wheel. Presumably, it is because of this reason that the potters, while engaged in bulk production, prefer to work on heavy wheels, so that they may not have to twirl the wheel again and again before completion of a pot. The *Oriya* (of which *jāti*, Dibakar is a member) and *Telugu* potters, who throw very large pots on the wheel, as a matter of fact, always use massive wheels in order to avoid the frequent renewal of impetus. However, it has been observed that a wheel, when spinning fast, makes 100 to 120 revolutions per minute and retains its momentum for six to eight minutes."

[28] Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [p 195] recorded that Orissan potters believe that their kilns have a special sacred significance in that the *Pāṇḍava* brothers hid in a kiln during their exile.

one thousand to twelve hundred pots, and Dibakar and his brother usually fire about five times a year. (Their cousins fire separately.) Dibakar commented, "Generally it takes us forty-five days of work to make enough vessels to fill this kiln, although we occasionally also fire in a field [temporary] kiln."

The kiln is filled in one day.[29] Two *tulasī caurā s* are installed first in the kiln, resting upon clay props so that their undersides can receive essential heat and ventilation. Next, beginning at the back, which has such a low ceiling that only two layers of small pots are possible, the unfired pots are added upside-down and supported upon clay sherds. The remaining space is filled by gradually stacking the pots towards the front in ever-rising tiers, interspersed with kindling. Thick wedges of clay are then fitted into the large opening, reducing it to a stoke hole that is stuffed with sticks and coconut fibre to be used for lighting. Loaded and ready, the kiln is left for the night. Regarding the fuel, Dibakar said, "We can use *gobar* (cow dung) as fuel for our field kilns, but never for the large kiln. For this we need much higher heat and so we primarily use wood, as well as some straw and leaves at certain times. During the firing, we add fuel as necessary by means of the front hole and three small vents at the back. These holes can be closed to regulate the temperature."[30]

At 7:00 a.m. the following day, Dibakar and his brother light the kiln. The potter commented, "It is important that the kiln not heat up too quickly, otherwise the pots might crack. So during the day we gradually increase the wood we feed to the flame." Working close by the kiln, the two brothers keep a steady watch throughout the day, adding, when necessary, sticks from the

[29] All photographs of Dibakar's kiln and the firing process were destroyed due to camera malfunction.

[30] Orissa's heavy annual rainfall makes the use of wood in kilns much more affordable than in most other Indian states, although severe deforestation, a national crisis within the last few decades, has seriously affected Orissa's resources as well.

large pile behind the shed. When it begins to darken at 6:20 p.m., they stop using wood and switch to rice straw, which they say keeps the flame hotter. At its height, the kiln reaches a temperature of approximately 550° C.[31] All night long, they alternate sleeping and tending the fire. Changing fuel again at 6:45 a.m. on the third day, Dibakar and his brother feed dried brush, small sticks, and leaves through the stoke holes of the kiln until 12:10 p.m., when they stop adding fuel and close all the vents. Explaining this procedure, Dibakar remarked, "We now use mud to seal all the holes, front and back. By this process, all the vessels and sculptures inside will turn black."

Cooling slowly, the kiln is left alone for the next forty-four hours. At 8 a.m. on the fifth day, Dibakar and his brother break the seals on the stoke hole and back vents. Within forty-five minutes, the inside of the oven is cool enough so that they are able to unload the vessels, aided by six family members. As soon as he can, Dibakar stands inside the kiln and carefully passes pots out to his brother, his two sons, and his brother's son, who relay them to both brothers' wives and Dibakar's daughter. As they sort them according to size and shape, the women ring each one with their nails to test for flaws. By 9:15 a.m., the kiln is empty and all the pots are sorted and stacked. Out of eleven hundred vessels, only seventy-three are cracked or broken.[32]

The *tulasī caurā* , now black like all the pots, is in perfect shape. It had been fired at a temperature high enough to allow it to last outside, through monsoons and hot summers, for up to thirty years. Now it is ready for collection by the family that had commissioned it, to be placed on the cleared

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[31] This estimate is derived from the calculations of Behura p 200.
[32] A comparative survey of firing vessels in similar kilns in Orissa may be found in ibid. pp 198-200. Fischer, Fischer, and Pathy [pp 199-200] recorded in detail the loading and reduction firing of terracotta horses and vessels in a kiln in Keonjhar District.

ground in front of their home. Remaining unpainted, its form, ornamentation, and colour will identify it as a temple for the goddess *Tulasī* (Plate 7.38).[33] Orissan lore deems it most auspicious to dedicate a new planter on the first day of one of the three holy months: *Māgha* (January-February), *Baisāka* (April-May), and *Kārtika* (October-November). *Kārtika Buda* , a festival which bathes and honours *Tulasī*, takes place on the first and last days of *Kārtika* , the most holy of these months.[34] This same ritual takes place on the first and last days of the other two months, but it is observed only by particularly devout *Vaiṣṇavites.* Before sunrise on the last day of *Kārtika* , all Orissans arise before dawn and walk to a nearby river, canal, stream, or to the seaside, and place into the water boats made of banana leaves in which lighted clay *dūpas* carry their prayers down the currents and out to sea.[35] The following account describes *Tulasī Pūjā* witnessed in Balikondalo.

Early in the morning of *Kārtika Buda*, long before dawn, Manjula, the widow of a *Muduli Kumbhāra,* joined the young girls of her family to sprinkle water on the dirt surrounding the *tulasī caurā* in front of their house. When the whole space was wet, they painted *raṅgoli* (rice powder designs of leaves, flowers, and conch shells highlighted with bright commercial powdered dyes) with their fingers directly on the ground beneath the *caurā* (Plate 7.39) Then, Manjula began the *puja* by kneeling before the planter and singing in a high, cracked voice:

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[33] The overall shape and tiers of these *tulasī caurās* reflect the *śikharas* (towers) and their component sections of the temples of Bhubaneshwar and Puri. Thus, the *mūla caurā,* two *dadhinauti,* and *dali caurā* of the planter correspond to the *bada, gandi, amla,* and *kalaśa* of a *śikhara.* See Fabri p 143.

[34] Maheswar Mohapatra [personal correspondence] wrote: "During this month (*Kartika*) all people from different caste and creed took bath before Sunrise and come in front of *Vrindavatti* (*Tulasī*). The widows come together to decorate the floors and sides near *Vrindavatti.* They offer fruits and milk to the Goddess. This *Puja* continues for two hours in every morning. ...During the *Puja* they all chanted about the story of *Vrindavatti.*"

[35] Maheswar Mohapatra claims that this *pūjā* honours the men who historically left Orissa to travel to the Indonesian archipelago for trade.

"O *Tulasī*,
You who are beloved of *Viṣṇu*,
You who fulfil the wishes of the devout,
I will bathe You.
You are the Mother of the World
Give me the blessings of *Viṣṇu*."

Rising to her feet, Manjula poured holy water from a small, brightly polished brass pot into the cupped palm of her right hand and sprinkled it upon the leaves of the bush. Her expression was one of adoration but also one that portrayed many years of close association, of friendship. For Manjula, the goddess *Tulasī* was incarnate in this herb, representing the duty and dedication, the love, virtue, and sorrow of all women.

Manjula's actions were repeated by the other women. Placing the brass pot on the ground amid the paintings, Manjula lighted camphor in a clay pot and waved the clouds of sweet smoke over and around the bush and its container. Holding a clay *dīpa* filled with lighted *ghī* in her right hand, she rotated it in a large circle three times in front of the *tulasī* plant. At this time she was joined by the village *Brāhman purohit* (Plate 7.40)who sat cross-legged to one side of the *caurā* . Bowls of fruit (bananas, apples, guavas, and the meat of dried coconuts) and hibiscus and marigold flowers were placed on the ground upon the *raṅgoli.* Incense sticks were lighted as the *Brāhman* recited *ślokas* to *Tulasī* and *Viṣṇu* (Plate 7.41), while Manjula once again *pranāmed* to the plant, singing:

"O *Tulasī*,
Within your roots are all the sacred places of the world,
And inside your stem live all the Gods and Goddesses,
Your leaves radiate every form of sacred fire.
Let me take some of your leaves that I may be blessed."

With her right hand clasped around the stem of the small bush, she shook it gently, causing three leaves to flutter to its base. Thanking the goddess, she placed a single leaf between her palms and prostrated herself

before the planter.[36] Joined by the other women, they lay in that position before the *caurā* for several minutes (Plate 7.42) while the *purohit* prayed and asked the goddess if he might perform the *abhiṣekan*. He first sprinkled holy water on the plant, then took a length of red cotton cloth and wrapped it around the bush. He then placed bright red hibiscus flowers in the upper leaves and hung garlands of marigolds around the stem and the planter. Culminating the ceremony, Manjula put the *tulasī* leaf in her mouth, taking into her body the spirit of the goddess. Followed by the other women, she circumambulated the *caurā* seven times, chanting:

> "O Goddess *Tulasī*,
> You who are the most precious
> Of the Lord Almighty [*Viṣṇu*],
> Who live according to His Divine Laws,
> I beseech You to protect the lives of my family
> And the spirits of those who have died.
> Hear me, O Goddess!"

As the first rays of the rising sun hit the *tulasī*'s top leaves, the ritual ended and the first day of *Kārtika* , a month particularly sacred to *Viṣṇu* and *Tulasī*, was honoured. Manjula performed a similar, but less elaborate, *pūjā* every morning and evening of the year; but the performance of *Kārtika Buda* was particularly auspicious. As Manjula was a recent widow (her husband, a potter, died several months earlier), *Kārtika* was a month of austerity and devotion. She ate only one vegetarian meal a day, was required to keep her thoughts focused in meditation, and began each day with special prayers to the goddess. Invoking the blessings of *Tulasī* upon the spirit of her dead husband, she fulfilled her sacred duty to her marriage, and thus ensured her

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[36] The *Hari-Bhakti-Vilasa* IX says: "The worshipper should then go to the *Tulasī* grove, and worship the shrub, which is *Harī*'s darling, with perfume, flowers, rice, bow down before it with complete prostration of the body, and pray with the appropriate *Mantra* and *Stava* for its favour. A large number of *Purana* and other texts supplies exuberant and endless eulogy of the sacred *Tulasī*. Sometimes the laudation is extravagant, but nothing appears exaggerated to the devotional mind, which even believes, among other things, that if one sits even for a single moment under the *Tulasī* shrub, the sins of one crore of re-births melt away! [De pp 362-363]"

right to a better life after death. By caring for and honouring this sacred bush, and by taking part of it into her own body, Manjula created a bond with the goddess — and, through Her, with the integrity, virtue, pleasure, and despair of all women.

Eligible unmarried girls perform another important ritual dedicated to *Tulasī* in the month of *Āśvina* (September-October). Called *Janhi Ośa* — for its focus upon a special type of edible gourd called *janhi* — its purpose is to beseech the goddess to help these young women find suitable and reliable husbands. The participants must eat only vegetarian meals and must abstain from eating *janhi* during the entire month. Each evening, the family *tulasī caurā* is decorated with *janhi* flowers, and the story of *Tulasī*'s dedication to her husband is recited by lamplight. Then offerings blessed by the goddess are divided and eaten by the devotees.[37]

The focus of daily prayers and seasonal festivities, this small and unassuming bush of herbal leaves is recognised by several hundred million Indians as the goddess incarnate (Plate 7.43). Representing honour, virtue, and steadfast loyalty, she is the archetype of Hindu femininity, revered by men and emulated with empathy by women. In Orissa, she is housed in terracotta temples whose design and decoration proclaim her glory. She is *Tulasī*, Mother of the World.

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[37] Behura pp 243-244. Mohanti [pp 197-198] writes of a ritual in his Puri District village honouring the new year on the first day of *Baisākha* (April-May) in which a *Brāhman purohit* hangs a terracotta pot perforated with tiny holes over each family's *tulasī* plant. At the beginning of each day during that month, after her bath, the headwoman of the family fills the pot with water, and the slow sprinkle bathes the goddess throughout the long, hot day.

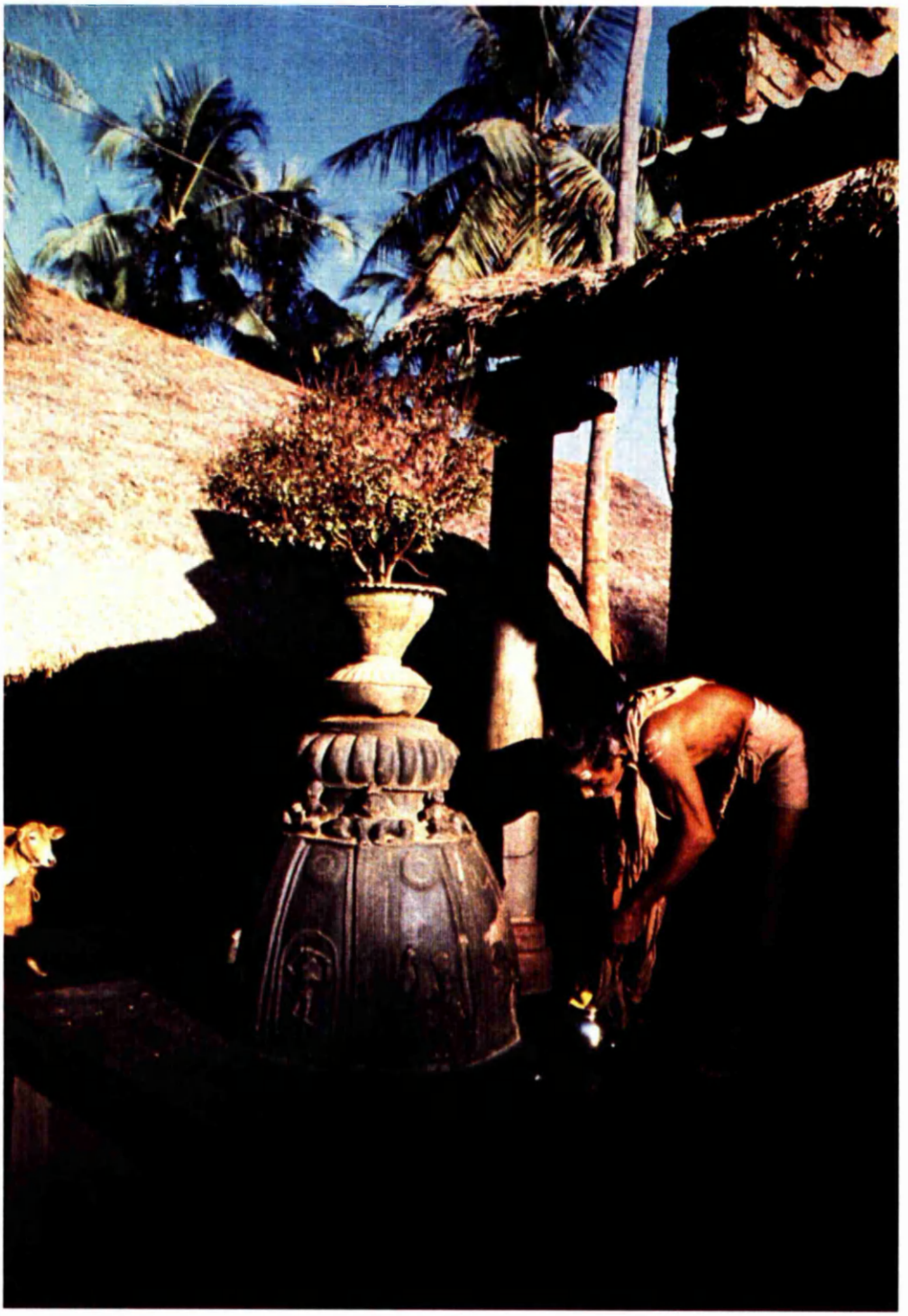


Plate 7.1) A *Brāhman* reaches for his *lota* to wash his household *Tulasī* bush with holy water as part of his daily prayers (Balikondalo, Puri District, Orissa).

Plate 7.2) A simple mud planter holds a *tulasī* bush in Jitwarpur, Darbhanga District, Bihar.

Plate 7.3) A pyramidal *tulasī* planter in Hitrali, North Kanara District, Karnataka.

Plate 7.4) A moulded terracotta *tulasī* planter typical of Mangalore, Karnataka.

Plate 7.5) A silver-painted moulded terracotta planter in Bicholim, Goa, has been sculpted with recessed niches for *Vaiṣṇavite* images.

Plate 7.6) Most of the Goan *tulasī* planters are brightly painted, such as this moulded one depicting *Gaṅesa* and *Bhīma* on its sides (Bicholim).

Plate 7.7) Made by descendants of the potters who sculpted extraordinary large terracotta temples centuries ago, contemporary *tulasī* planters in West Bengal have shapes reminiscent of those ancient prototypes (Vishnupur, Bankura District).

Plate 7.8) A Bengali planter shaped like a temple covered with vines in Panchmura, Bankura District.

Plate 7.9) Exemplifying the rapid Hinduization of many animistic tribal peoples, this planter in the shape of the goddess *Vrindāvatī* (another name for *Tulasī*) was commissioned from nontribal Hindu potters to be placed in front of a *Kuttiya Kondh* (tribal) house (Batkul, Baudh Khondmals District, Orissa).

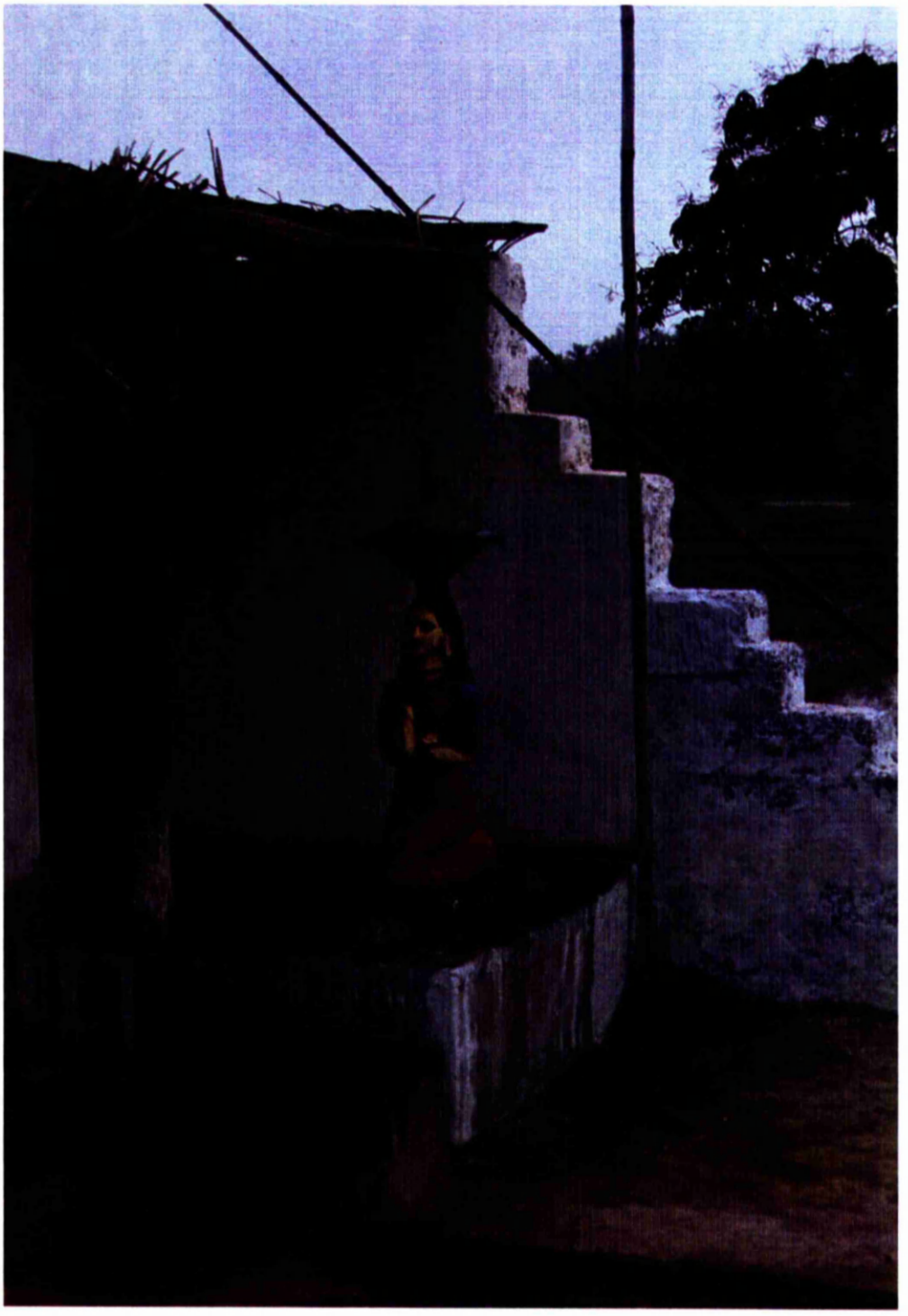


Plate 7.10) A common form of cement *tulasī vṛndāvan* sculpted to resemble the goddess in Puri District, Orissa (Oraputta).

Plate 7.11) A stone *tulasī caurā* in Puri which directly copies the style of the main śikharas of the *Jagannāth* temple.

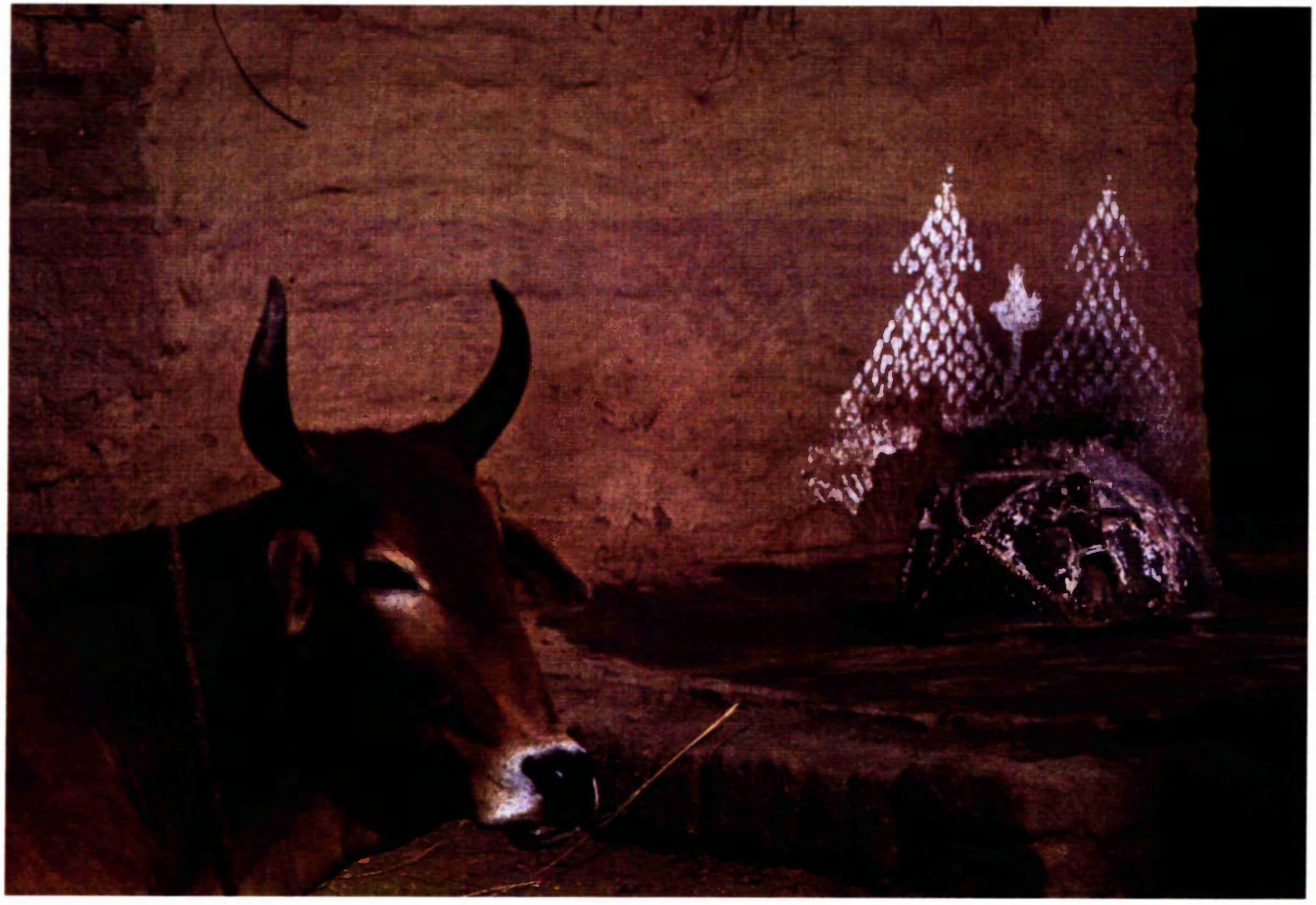


Plate 7.12) A simple terracotta *tulasī caura* in Jogeshwarapura, Puri District, adorned only with four *maṇḍiracaruni* figures.

Plate 7.13) Begunian, Puri District.

Plate 7.14) An elaborate *tulasī caura* in Padmapoda, Puri District, is elaborately decorated with figures representing *Narasiṃha*, *Maṇḍiracaruni*, donor figures, musicians, and others.

Plate 7.15) The main street in Balikondalo, Puri District.

Plate 7.16) Kuntalī paints rice-flour paste decorations (*citra*) on the courtyard walls of her house to beautify it for the *Kurala Pañcami* festival.

Plate 7.17) A *tulasī caura* stands alongside wall decorations painted for *Kurala Pancami*.

Plate 7.18) Dibakar begins by mixing his clay by hand.

Plate 7.19) Next, his son and nephew work it with their feet to remove any bubbles.

Plate 7.20) A thin circle of sand is poured to the exact circumference of the base.

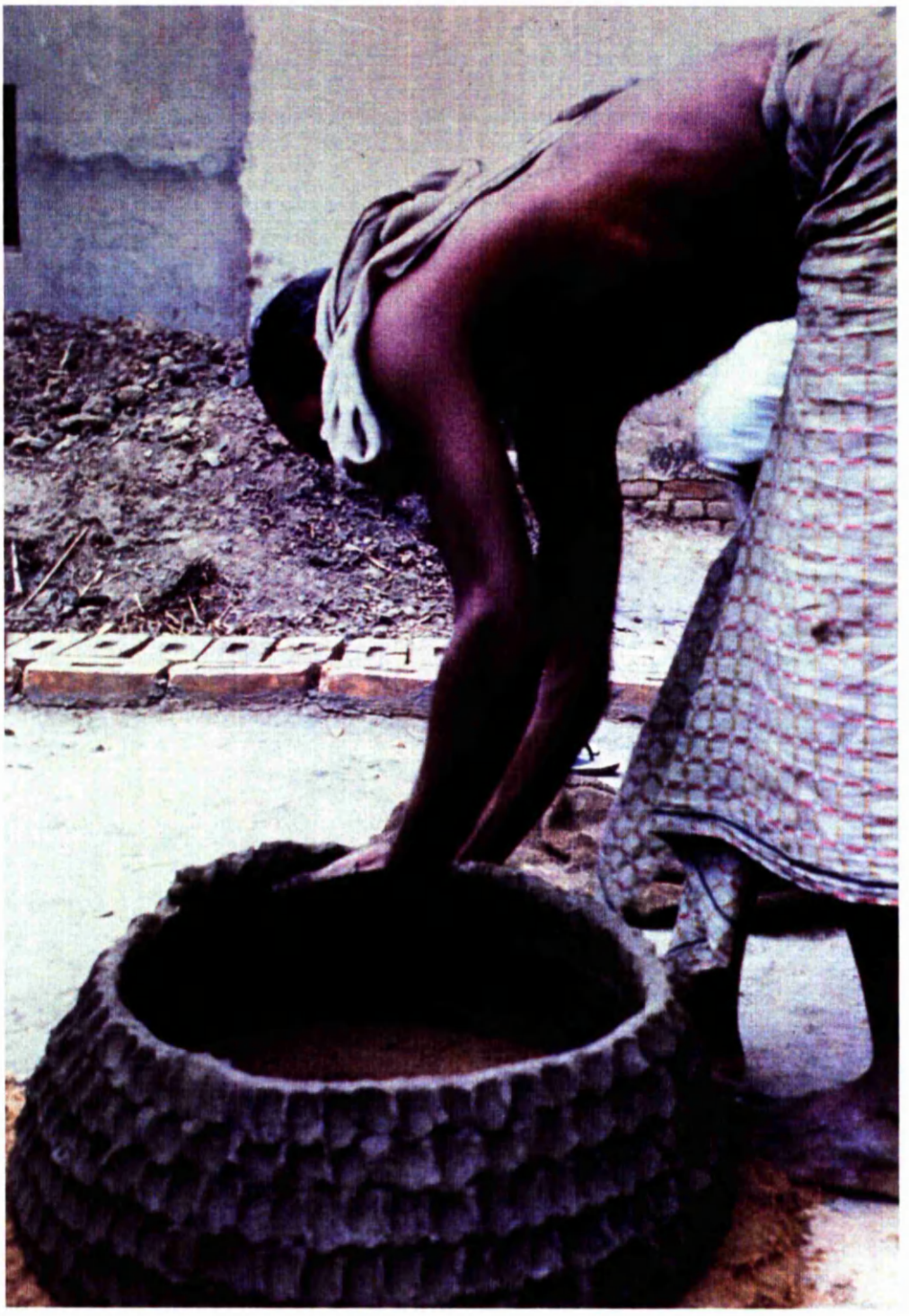


Plate 7.21) Dibakar coils large ropes of clay into rings and builds them up into the planter's first tier.

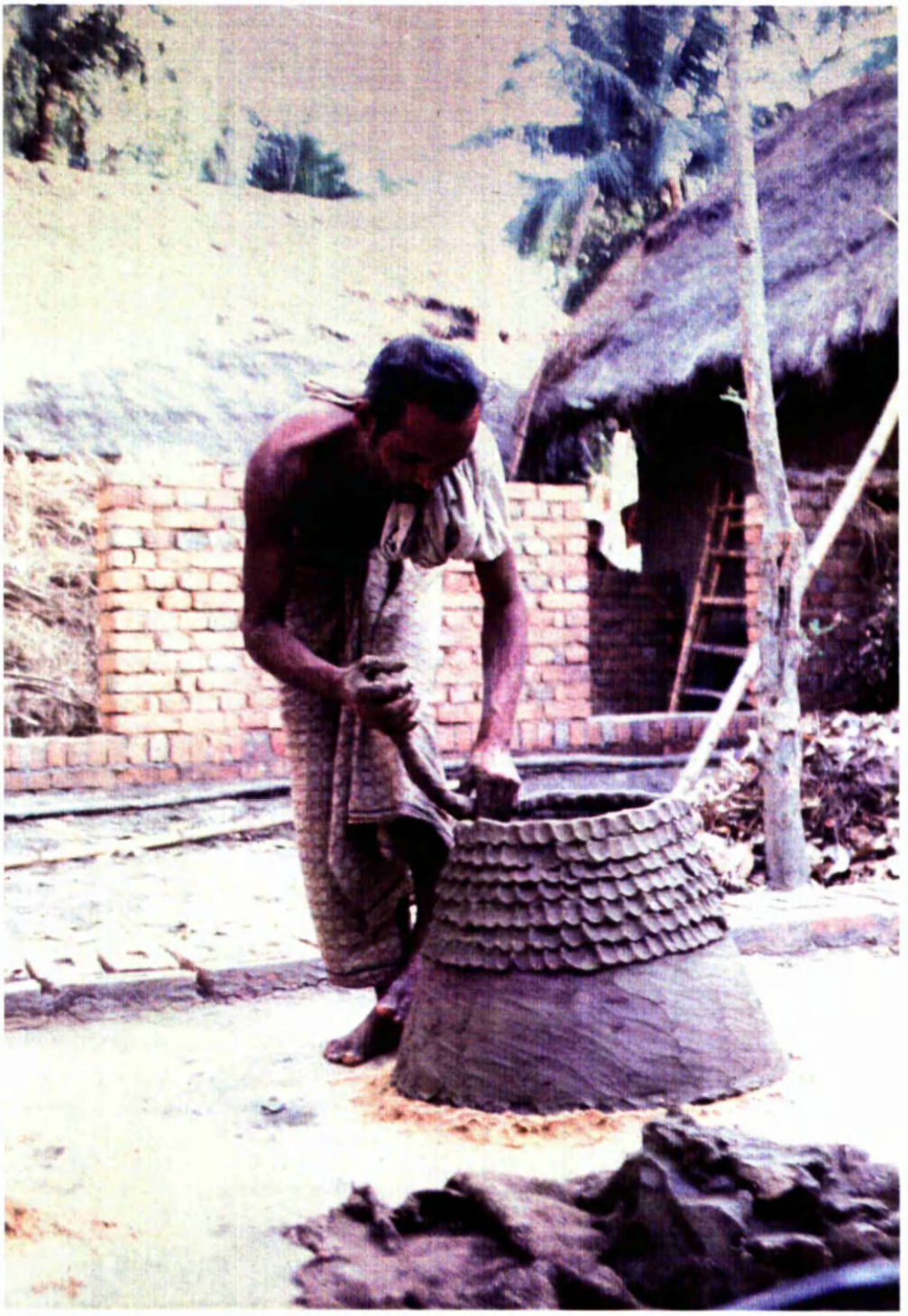


Plate 7.22) As the first tier rises, he narrows the rings of clay.

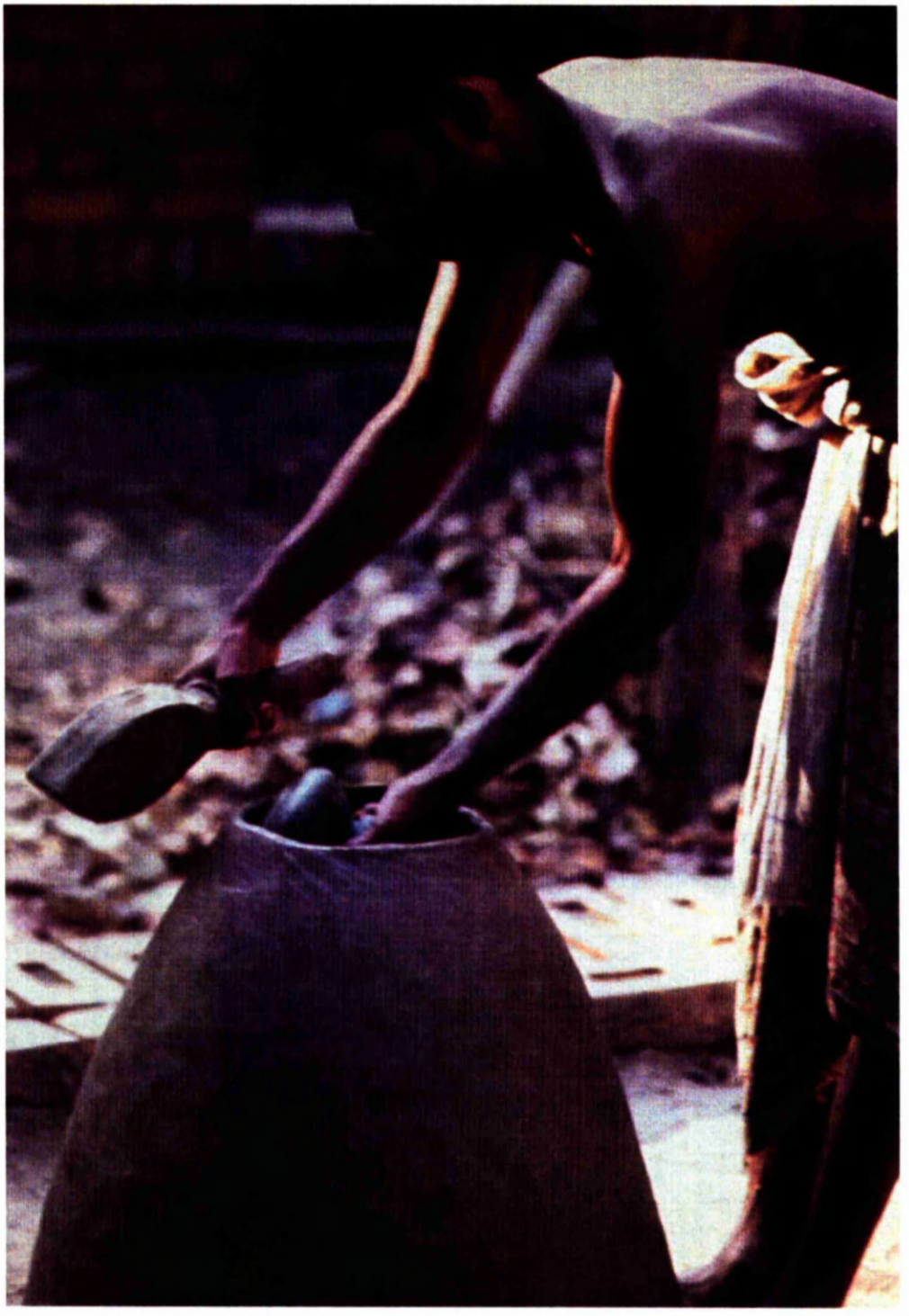


Plate 7.23) Using a stone anvil and wooden mallet on the second day, he beats the coils together so that the surface of the tier is smooth.

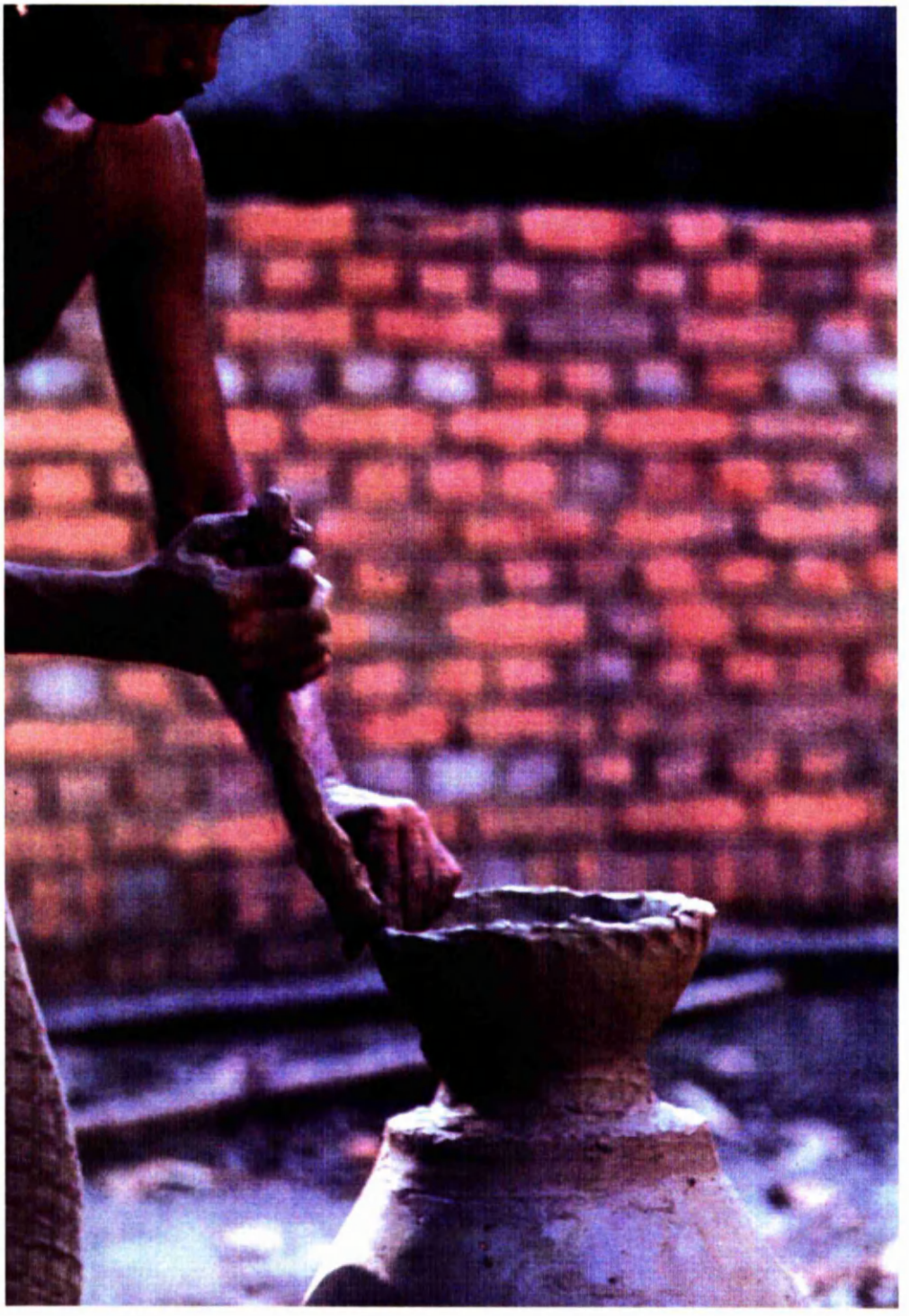


Plate 7.24) Ropes of clay are then added to form a smaller second tier.

Plate 7.25) On the third day, Dibakar begins to give a fluted edge to the second tier.

Plate 7.26) By adding vertical strips of clay he creates four separate sections on the edge of the first tier.

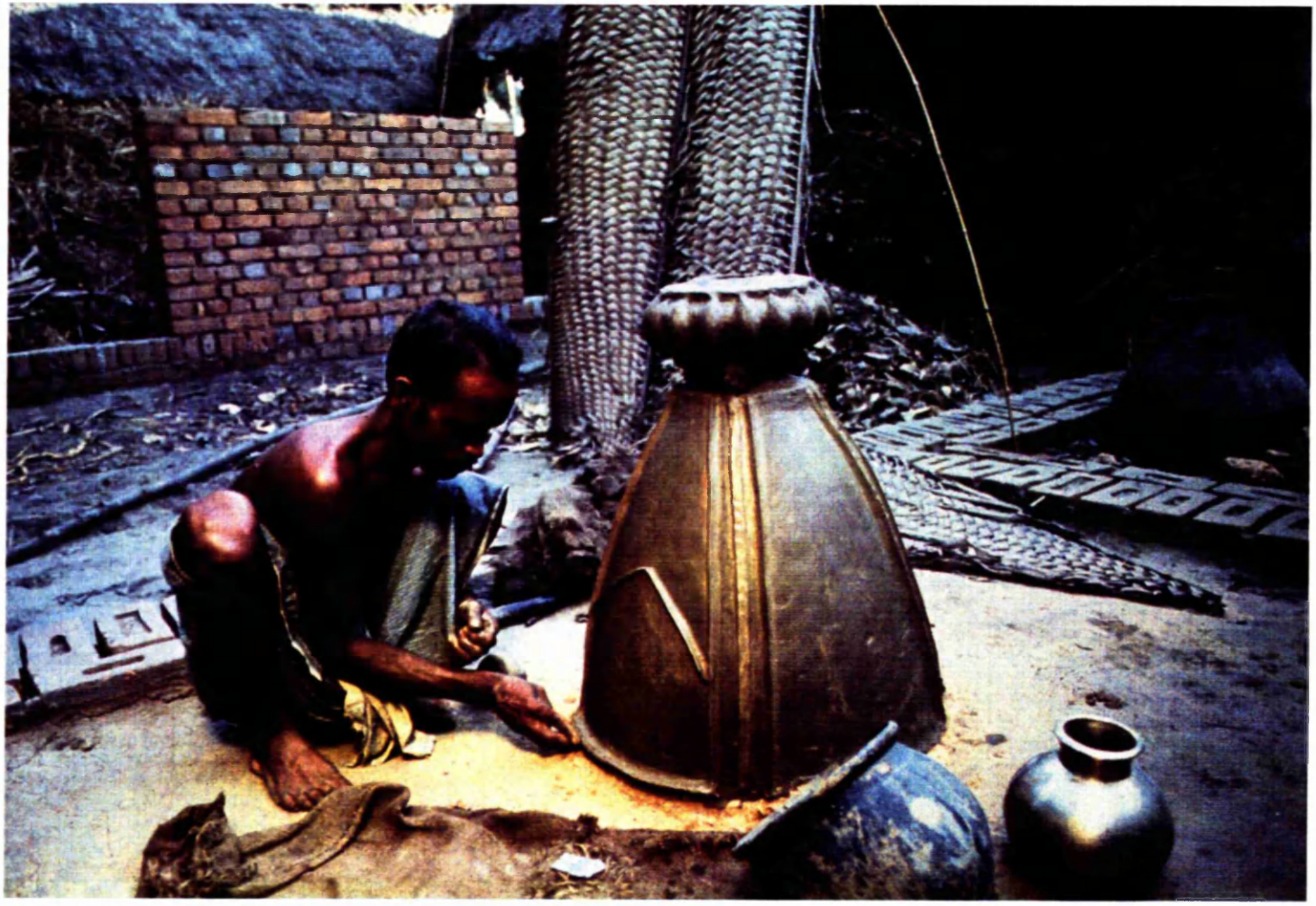


Plate 7.27) Each section is further delineated with strips of clay.

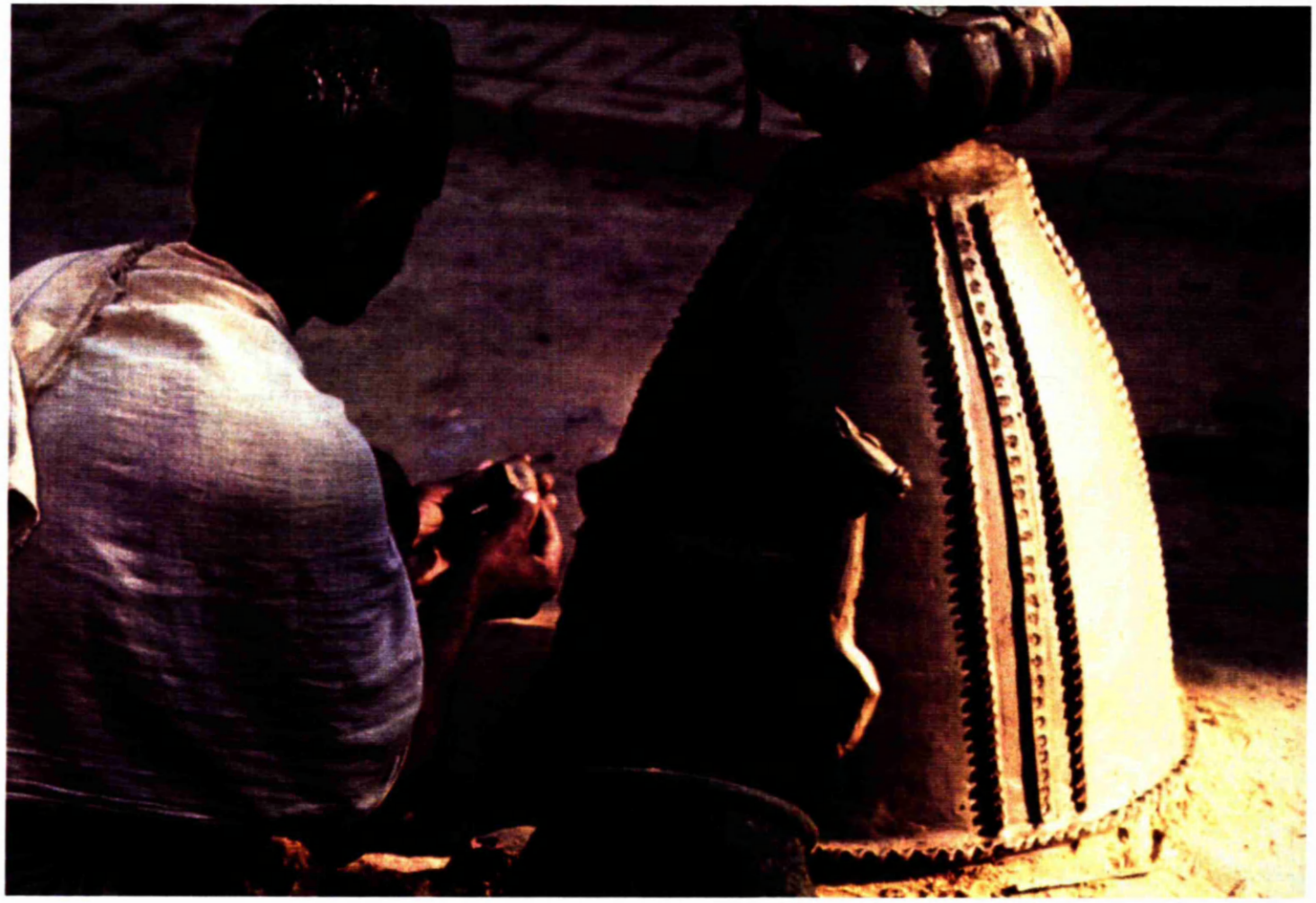


Plate 7.28) Also on the third day, Dibakar starts to sculpt a bas-relief depicting a horse and rider to symbolize *Sūrya*.

Plate 7.29) Two sets of musicians are added to the second and third panels on the fourth day.

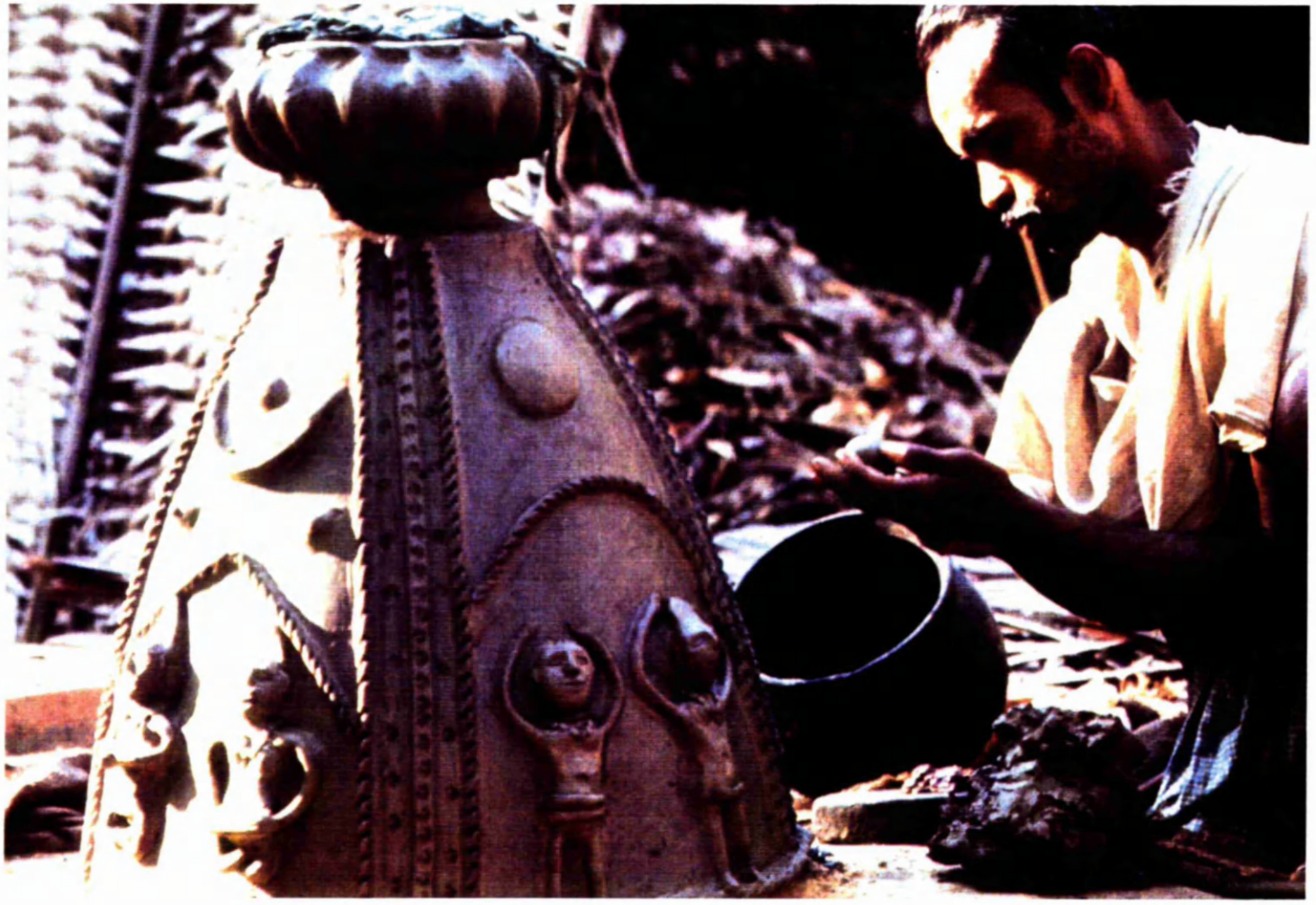


Plate 7.30) Two finished panels depicting sets of muscians.

Plate 7.31) On the fifth day, Dibakar's fourteen-year-old son, Prabhakar, helps him with the final details, refining bas-reliefs.

Plate 7.32) Working together, father and son add whimsical *Narasiṁha* figures to the junction between the first and second tiers.

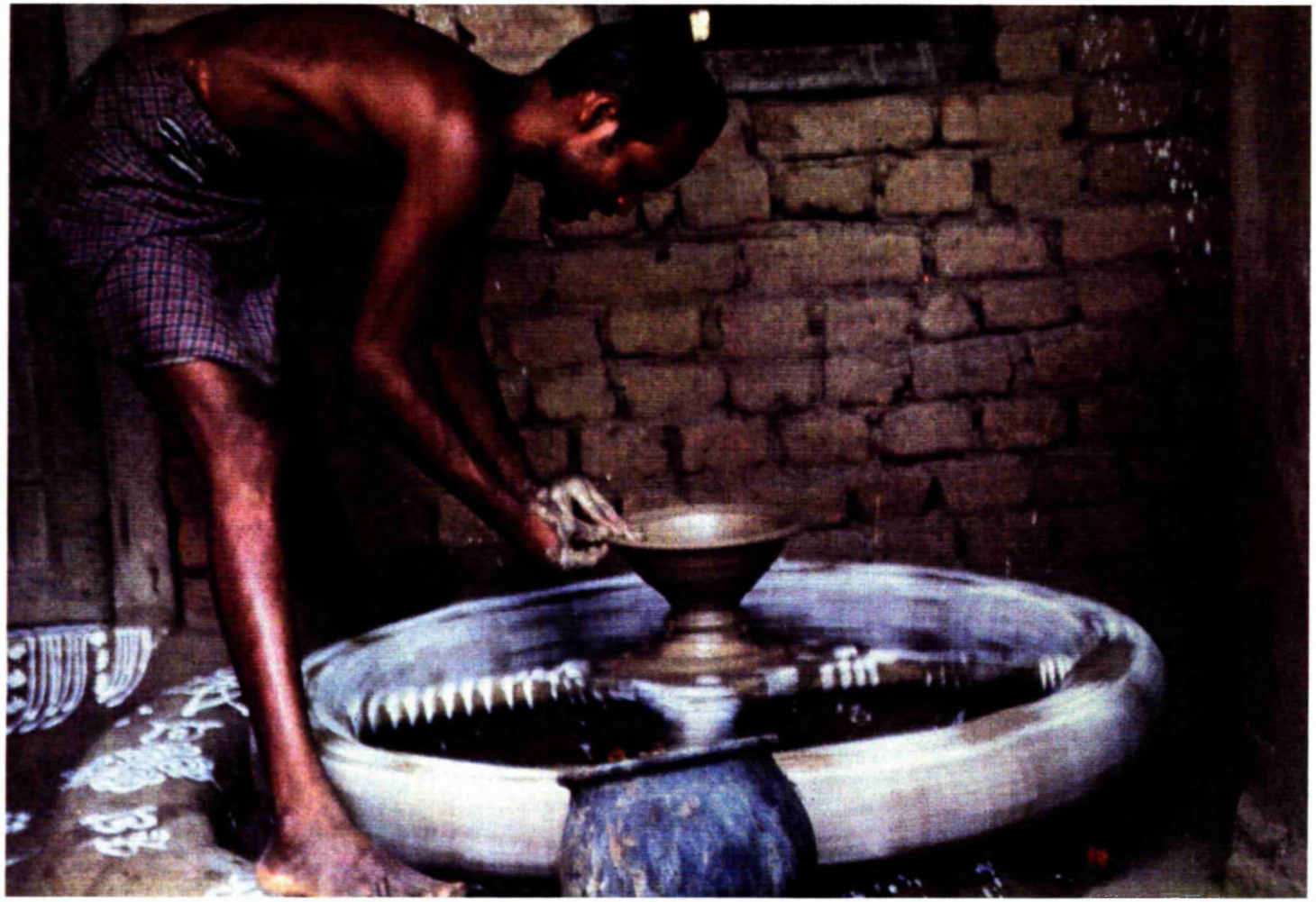


Plate 7.33) Dibakar then throws on his wheel the bowl that will become the third tier, intended to hold the roots of the *tulasī* plant.

Plate 7.34) After attaching the bowl to the top of the second tier, Dibakar and Prabhakar crimp its edges, and the *tulasī caura* is finished.

Plate 7.35) The finished *tulasī caura* needs to dry thoroughly before it may be fired.

Plate 7.36) Dibakar Muduli's finished, but unfired, *tulasī caura*.

Plate 7.37) Dibakar's *tulasī cauras* , sculpted and fired, are stored under the eaves of a neighbour's house until they are collected by devotees.

Plate 7.38) A highly refined *tulasī caura*, sculpted more than twenty years before by Dibakar's father, stands alongside the main street of Balikondalo.

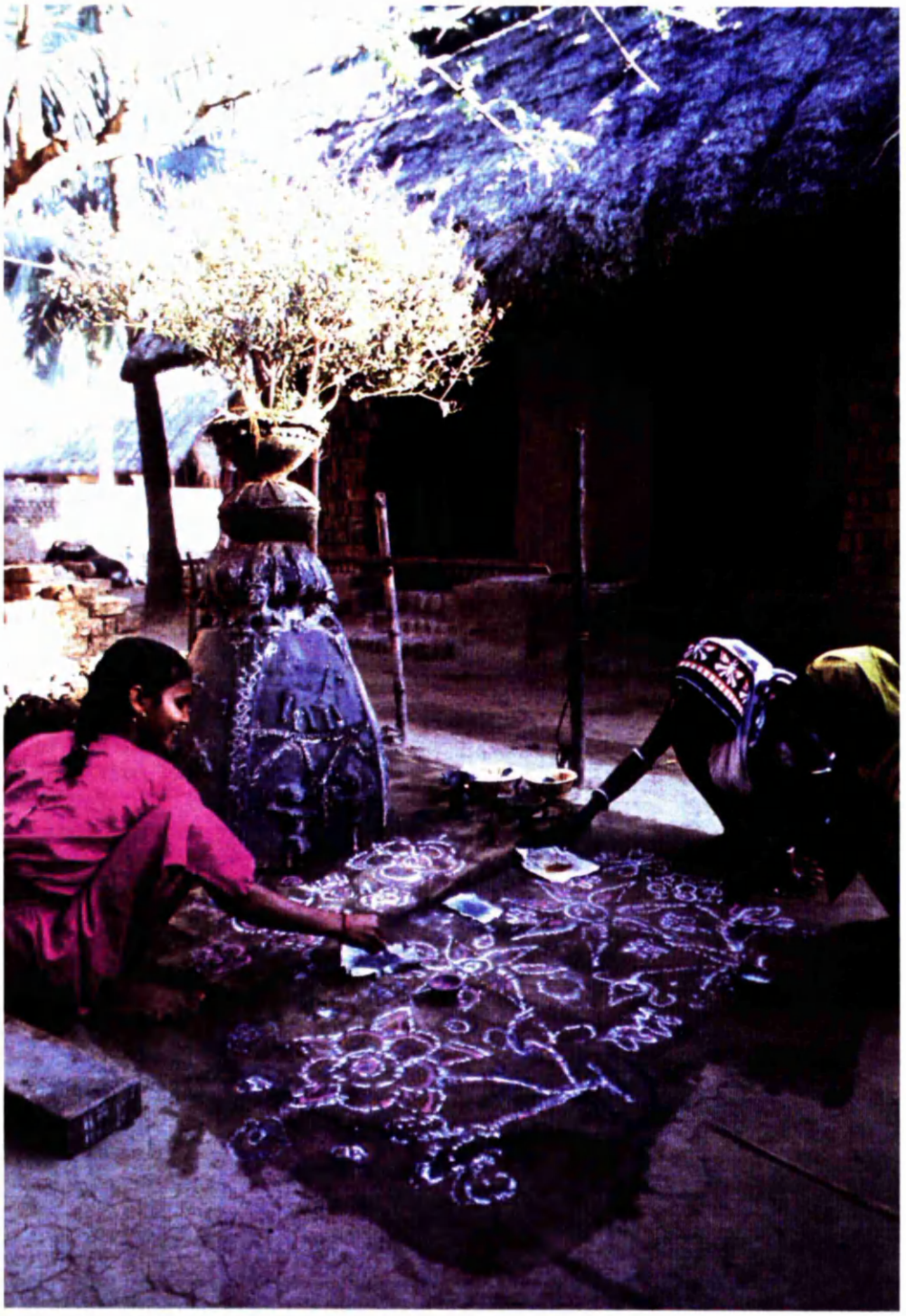


Plate 7.39) Before beginning their *Tulasī Pūjā* for *Kārtik Buda* in Balikondalo, the female devotees use rice powder and commercial dyes to paint colourful floral designs upon the ground in front of their *caura*.

Plate 7.40) The *Brāhman purohit* prays to the goddess *Tulasī* before he begins conducting the *pūjā*.

Plate 7.41) While the *Brāhman* chants *ślokas* to *Tulasī*'s greatness, the devotees light incense to the goddess.

Plate 7.42) Portraying their total reverence for the Goddess incarnate in their *tulasī* bush, devotees prostrate themselves in prayer before the sculpted terracotta vessel that enshrines the plant.

Plate 7.43) Jogeshwarapura, Puri District.

APPENDIX

The following lists, according to each state, the communities and districts in which potters were interviewed for this thesis and the dates of those interviews. In order to protect the identities of the potters, only those names have been given of the potters who are quoted in the text and whose permission was granted to name them herein. All other potters are refered to by letter only, ie. Potter A, Potter B, etc.

LIST OF COMMUNITIES AND POTTERS SURVEYED

ANDHRA PRADESH	
Salur, Vishakhapatnam District	
10-12 March, 1978	Potter A, Potter B
BIHAR	
Muzzarfarpur, Muzzarfarpur District	
15 March, 1983	
30 Oct, 1989	Potter A
Nataul, Gaya District	
1 Nov, 1981	Potter A
Patna, Patna District	
30-31 Oct, 1981	Potter A, Potter B
26-29 Oct, 1989	Mahesh Pandit Rambabu Pandit
DELHI	
8-11 March, 1987	Potter A
GOA	
Bicholim	
9-10 Nov, 1989	
11 March, 1990	Zilu Harmalkar, Potter A, Potter B
GUJARAT	
Saraspur, Ahmedabad District	
12-20 Jan, 1975	Potter A, Potter B
Bhuj, Kachchh District	
11-13 March, 1988	
Bodeli, Baroda District	
7 March, 1988	Potter A
Deohati, Baroda District	
4-6 April, 1980	
7-8 March, 1988	
16 Nov, 1988	Potter A
Jamburi, Kachchh District	
12 March, 1988	Potter A
HARYANA	
Jind, Jind District	
18 April, 1975	Potter A

KARNATAKA

Badami, Bijapur District	
March 17-19, 1981	Potter A
Haligadde, North Kanara District	
April 2-3, 1981	
April 9, 1982	Potter A
Hegde, North Kanara District	
April 6, 1981	
April 11-13, 1982	Potter A
Hunsur, Mysore District	
March 23. 1981	Potter A
Kamalapura, Bellary District	
March 12-14, 1981	Potter A, Potter B
Mangalore, South Kanara District	
March 28-29, 1981	Potter A, Potter B
Mercara, Coorg District	
March 23-24, 1981	Potter A
Mysore, Mysore District	
March 21, 1981	
April 1-2, 1982	Potter A, Potter B
Udipi, South Kanara District	
March 25-26, 1991	Potter A

KERALA

Alleppey, Alleppey District	
20 Jan, 1990	Potter A
Ettumanur, Kottayam District	
22 Jan, 1990	Potter B
Pullikurchi, Trivandrum District	
7-8 March, 1983	Potter A

MADHYA PRADESH

Ambua, Dhar District	
15 & 18 Feb, 1987	Potter A
Bhopal, Raisen District	
20 Feb, 1987	Potter A
Chandpur, Jhabua District	
16-18 Feb, 1987	Potter A, Potter B, Potter C
Dhamna, Chhatarpur District	
14-15 Jan, 1987	
18-19 Oct, 1988	Mani Ram, Potter A
Karohi, Chhatarpur District	
17 Jan, 1987	Potter A
Khera, Chhatarpur District	
16 Oct, 1988	Potter A
Gwalior, Gwalior District	
26-28 March, 1987	Kumar Pal
Surajpur, Chhatarpur District	
15 Jan, 1987	Potter A
Singhpur Charanpattika, Chhatarpur District	
18 Jan, 1987	
17 Oct, 1988	Potter A

MAHARASHTRA

Andheri, Bombay District	
18-19 Feb, 1975	
12-13 Feb, 1987	Potter A, Potter B
Paithan, Aurangabad District	
16 Feb, 1987	
15-18 Jan 1990	Potter A, Potter B
Shukrawar, Pune District	
12-14 Feb, 1978	
16 Feb, 1987	Potter A

ORISSA

Athagarh, Cuttack District	
16 Feb, 1988	Potter A
Balikondalo, Puri District	
12-20 Feb, 1979	
9 April, 1980	
8-11 Feb, 1988	
1-14 Feb, 1990	Dibakar Muduli, Potter A, Potter B, Potter C, Potter D
Batkul, Baudh Khondmal District	
14 April, 1979	Potter A
Bissamcuttack, Koraput District	
7-12 March, 1979	Potter A
Deogaon, Bolangir District	
13 March, 1979	Potter A
Khonant, Puri District	
16 March, 1978	
10 Feb, 1988	Potter A, Potter B
Jeypore, Koraput District	
5 Feb, 1979	Potter A
Salganj, Puri District	
9 Feb, 1988	
7 Nov, 1988	Potter A

RAJASTHAN

Bu Naraotan, Nagaur District	
5-6 October, 1989	Potter A, Potter B
Churu, Churu District	
22 March, 1988	Potter A
Gogadev, Jaisalmer District	
1-2 Feb, 1987	Potter A
Jaipur, Jaipur District	
Jan 14, 1978	Potter A
Kota, Kota District	
7-10 Feb, 1987	Potter A., Potter B
Molela, Udaipur District	
Jan 18-20, 1978	Mohanlal, Potter A, Potter B
Nagaur, Nagaur District	
5 Feb, 1987	
5 Oct, 1988	Potter A
Nawalgarh, Jhunjhunu District	
20 March, 1988	Potter A, Potter B

TAMIL NADU

Gudithangichavadi, South Arcot District	
16 Oct-8 Nov, 1980	
4-6 Feb & 16-17 March, 1981	
20 Jan & 23 Feb, 1982	
17-18 Jan, 1983	Vaithylinga Pathar
	Jagadesan Pathar
12 Nov, 1988	Jagadesan Pathar
Panruti, South Arcot District	
24 & 29 Oct, 1980	
6 Feb, 1981	
18 Jan , 1983	A. Subramaniya Pathar
Pattiamdikampatti, Thanjavur District	
24 Feb, 1982	Potter A
Thiruvanmiyur, Madras District	
12-14 Oct, 1980	
15 Jan, 1981	Potter A
Vandipalliam, South Arcot District	
12 Oct, 1980	Potter A
Velangambadi, South Arcot District	
25 Oct, 1980	Potter A
Yarlandakullam, Madurai District	
28 Feb, 1982	

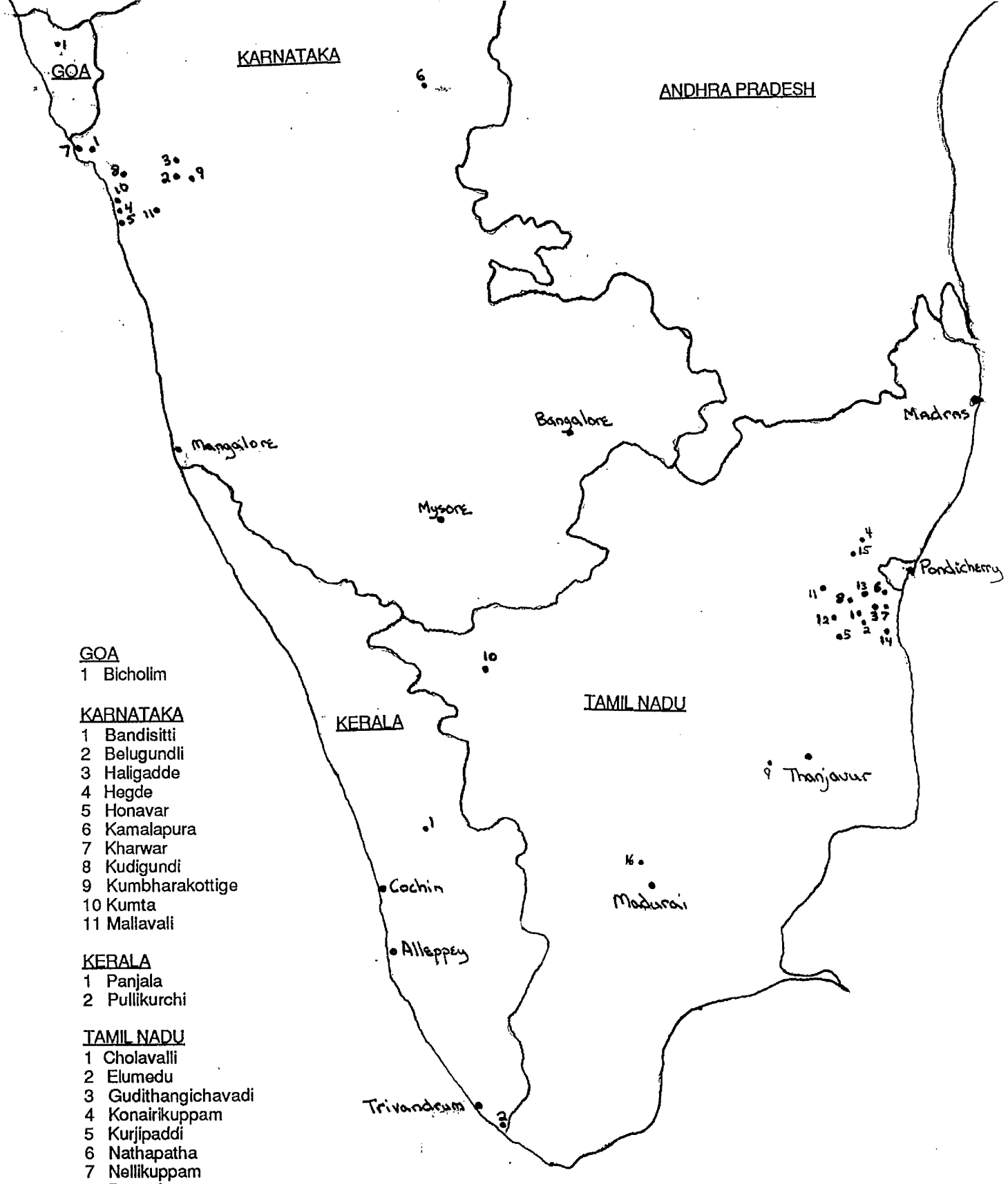
UTTAR PRADESH

Ramnagar, Varanasi District	
23 Oct, 1981	
21 Oct, 1989	Potter A, Potter B
Azamgarh, Azamgarh District	
11 Nov, 1981	Potter A
Bhitauli, Gorakhpur District	
26 Oct, 1988	
1 March, 1990	Potter A
Bistauli, Gorakhpur District	
23, 28 Oct, 1988	
26 Feb, 1990	Potter A
Dharmoli, Deoria District	
25 Oct, 1988	
27 Feb, 1990	Potter A, Potter B
Gorahwa, Gorakhpur District	
14 Nov, 1981	Potter A
Gorakhpur, Gorakhpur District	
27 Oct, 1988	Potter A, Potter B
Khura, Allahabad District	
21 Oct, 1988	
19 Oct, 1989	Potter A
Mundera, Deoria District	
25 Oct, 1988	
24 Feb-8 March, 1990	Ram Dhari Prajapati
26 Feb, 6 March, 1990	Shiv Bacchan Prajapati
Nauranga, Gorakhpur District	
14 Nov, 1981	Suk Raj, Shyam Deo Prajapati
Poonda Negala, Aligarh District	
3 March, 1987	Potter A

Tiwain, Deoria District	
8 March, 1990	Potter A
WEST BENGAL	
Bankura, Bankura District	
5 April, 1978	Potter A
Baruipur, 24 Parganas District	
2 April, 1979	Potter A
Midnapur, Midnapur District	
29-30 March, 1978	Potter A
Panchmura, Bankura District	
2-3 April, 1978	
16-17 Feb, 1990	Potter A, Potter B
Vishnupur, Bankura District	
1-4 April, 1978	
16 Feb, 1990	Potter A

MAPS

The following maps are drawn on a scale of 1 inch =100 km. Sites refered to in the text or in the plates are indicated by numbers and organized by state. The locations are as precise as possible; but the positions of many of the villages cited are not given on any available published map, and therefore may be inaccurate. The maps should be used for text reference only.

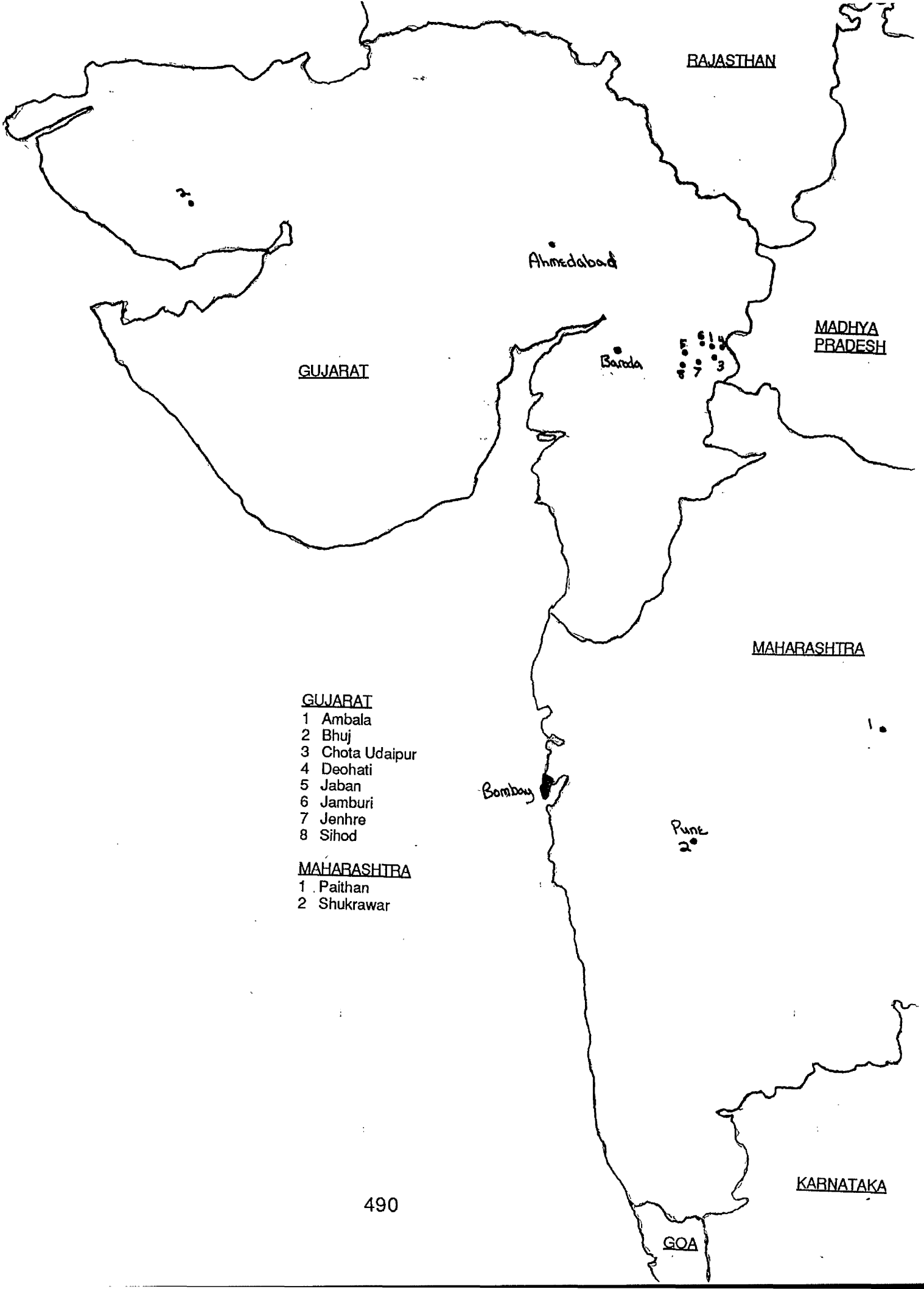


GOA
1 Bicholim

KARNATAKA
1 Bandisitti
2 Belugundli
3 Haligadde
4 Hegde
5 Honavar
6 Kamalapura
7 Kharwar
8 Kudigundi
9 Kumbharakottige
10 Kumta
11 Mallavali

KERALA
1 Panjala
2 Pullikurchi

TAMIL NADU
1 Cholavalli
2 Elumedu
3 Gudithangichavadi
4 Konairikuppam
5 Kurjipaddi
6 Nathapatha
7 Nellikuppam
8 Panruti
9 Pattiamdikampatti
10 Puddukottai
11 Semakottai
12 Thondamanatham
13 Vadakalpattu
14 Vandipalliam
15 Velangambadi
16 Yarlandakullam

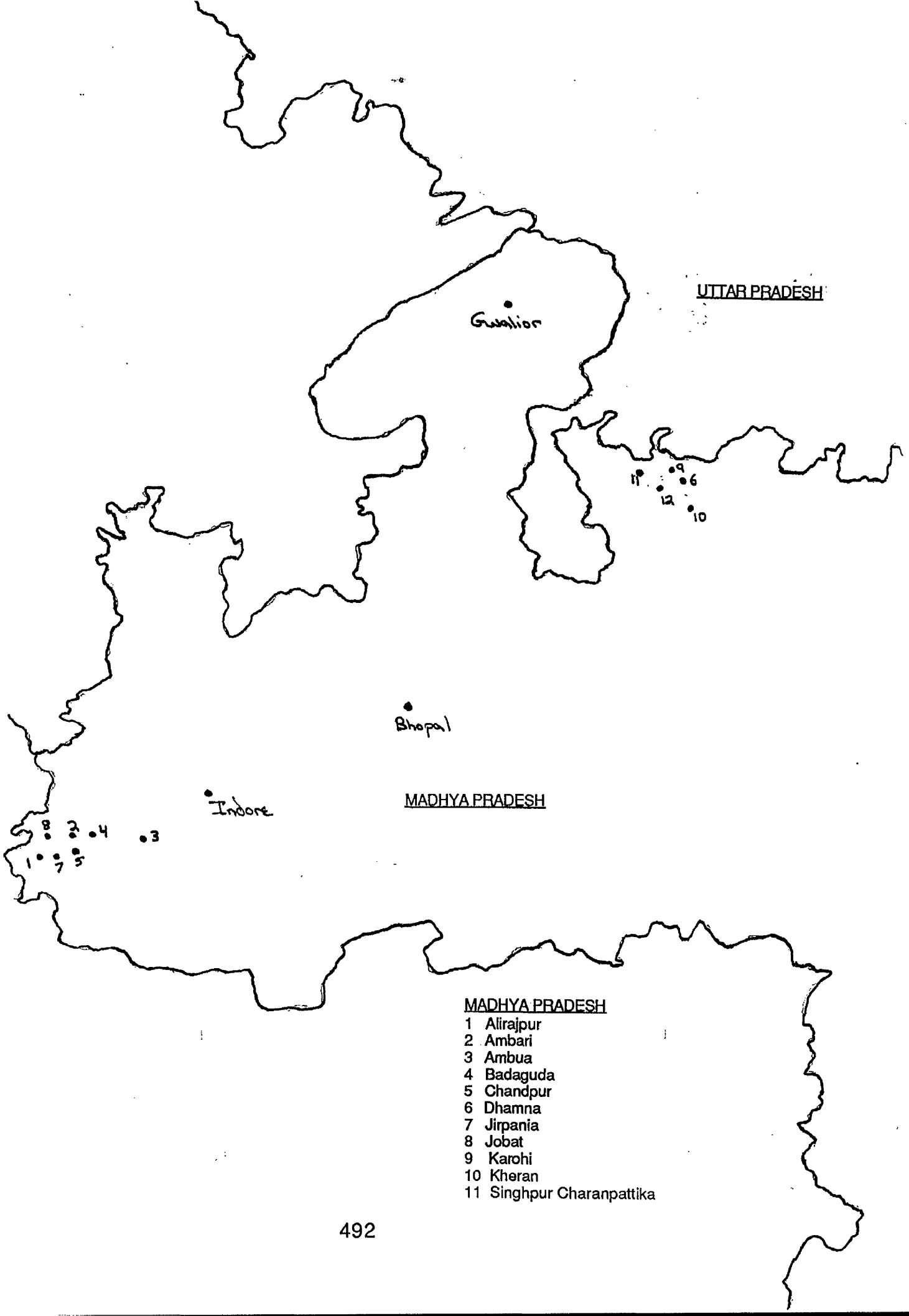


GUJARAT
1 Ambala
2 Bhuj
3 Chota Udaipur
4 Deohati
5 Jaban
6 Jamburi
7 Jenhre
8 Sihod

MAHARASHTRA
1 Paithan
2 Shukrawar

RAJASTHAN
1 Gogadev
2 Mandawa
3 Molela
4 Nawalgarh

HARYANA
1 Jind

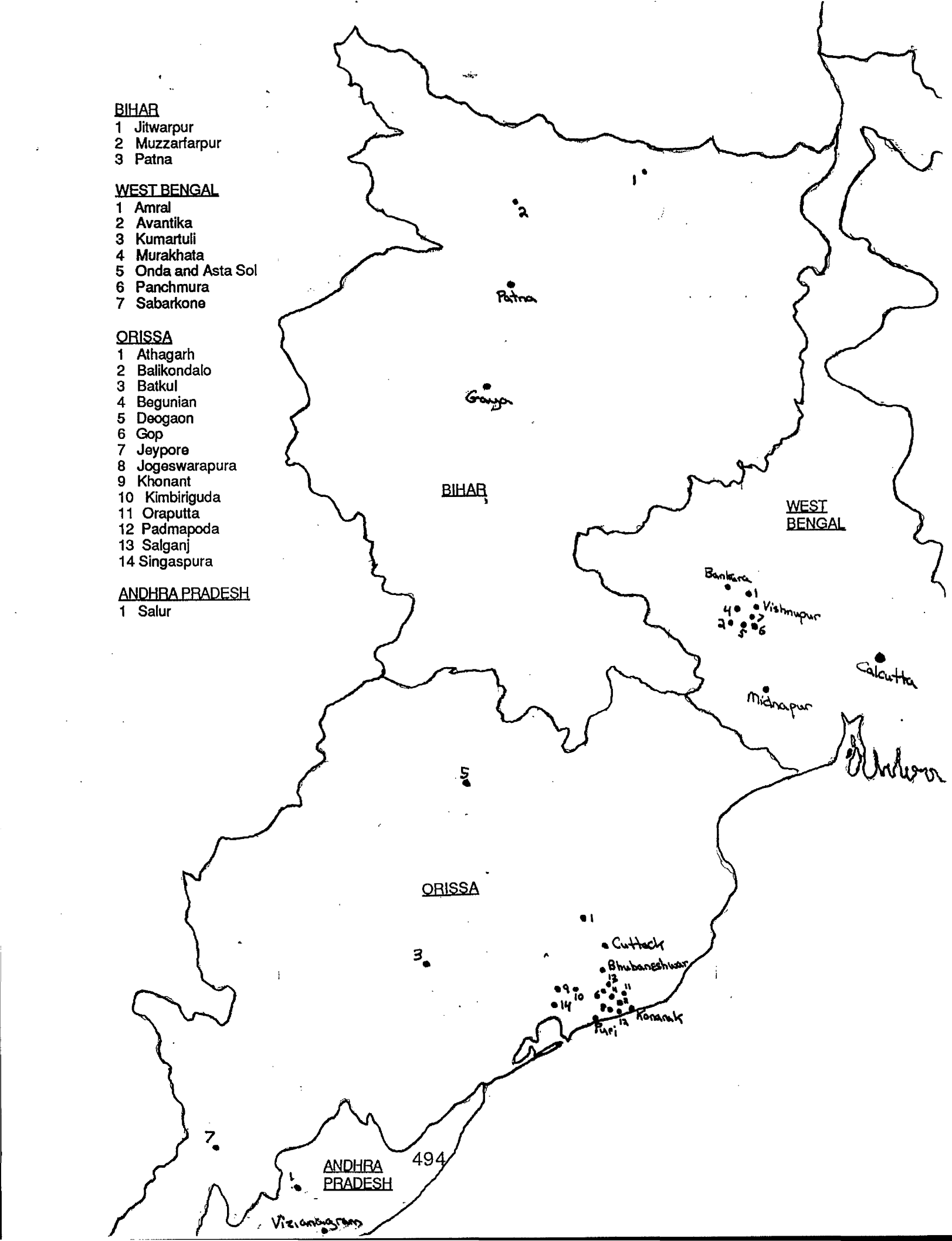


MADHYA PRADESH

1 Alirajpur
2 Ambari
3 Ambua
4 Badaguda
5 Chandpur
6 Dhamna
7 Jirpania
8 Jobat
9 Karohi
10 Kheran
11 Singhpur Charanpattika

UTTAR PRADESH

1 Banwari Tola
2 Bistauli
3 Bhitauli
4 Chhatiram
5 Chowri Sathawa
6 Garaura Bazar
7 Gorakhpur
8 Gorikud
9 Khura
10 Kushinagarh
11 Madhavapur
12 Mazgaonwa
13 Mirjamalpur
14 Mundera
15 Nauranga
16 Orwalia
17 Poonda Negala
18 Shamdeoria
19 Tiwain
20 Vikrampur


BIHAR
1 Jitwarpur
2 Muzzarfarpur
3 Patna
WEST BENGAL
1 Amral
2 Avantika
3 Kumartuli
4 Murakhata
5 Onda and Asta Sol
6 Panchmura
7 Sabarkone
ORISSA
1 Athagarh
2 Balikondalo
3 Batkul
4 Begunian
5 Deogaon
6 Gop
7 Jeypore
8 Jogeswarapura
9 Khonant
10 Kimbiriguda
11 Oraputta
12 Padmapoda
13 Salganj
14 Singaspura
ANDHRA PRADESH
1 Salur
Patna
Gaya
BIHAR
WEST BENGAL
Bankura
Vishnupur
Calcutta
Midnapur
ORISSA
Cuttack
Bhubaneshwar
Puri
Konarak
ANDHRA PRADESH
Vizianagram

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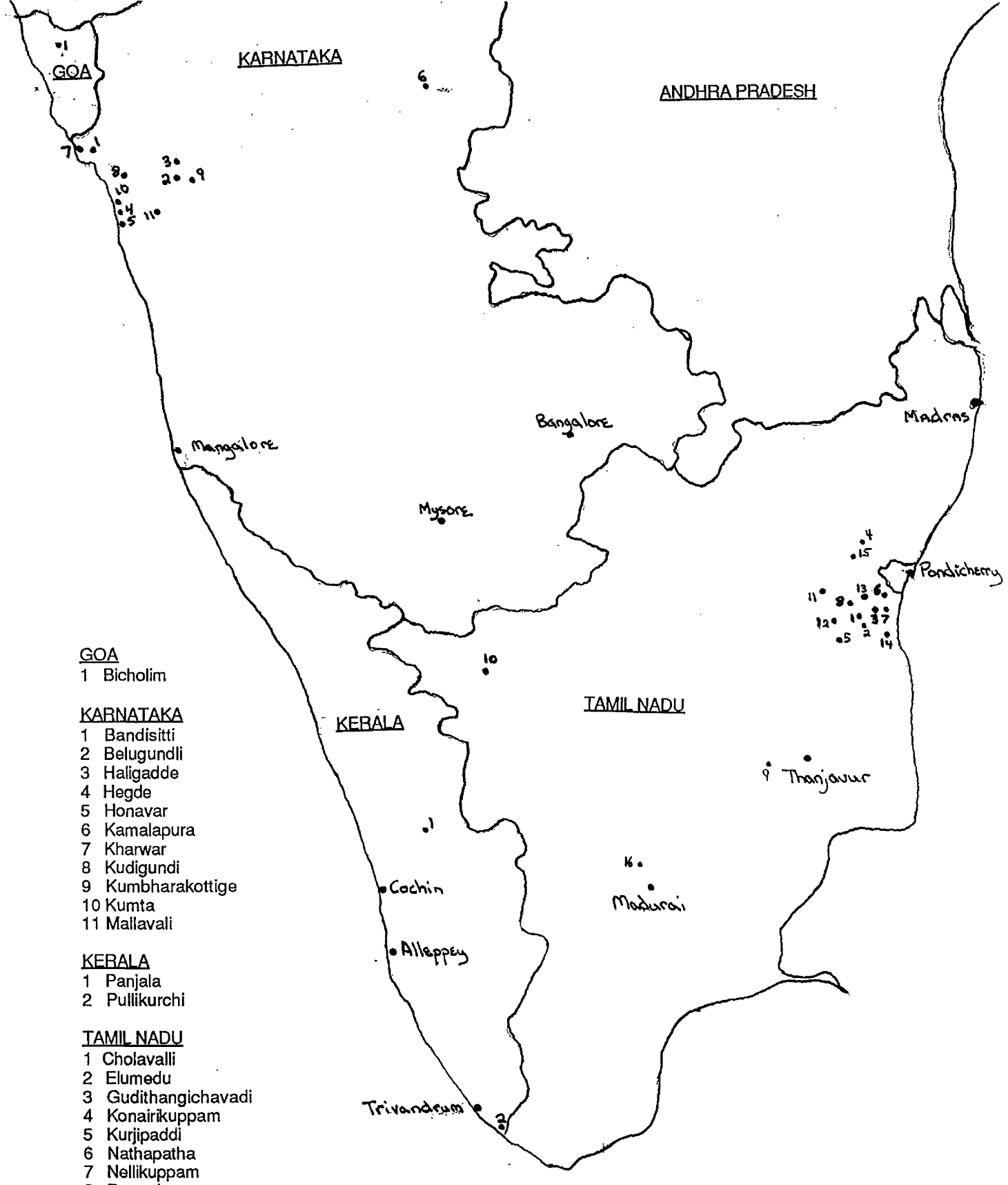
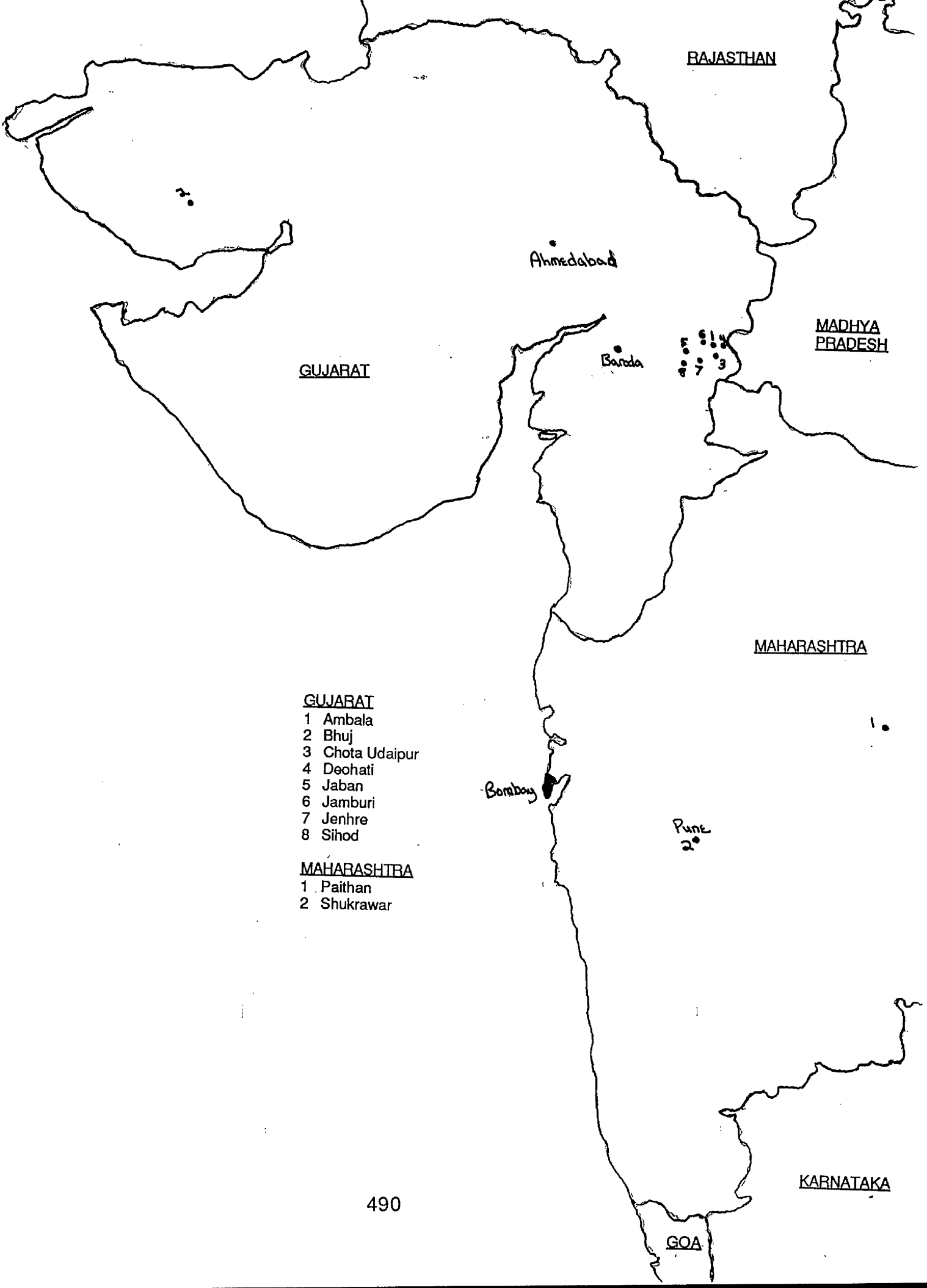


GOA
1 Bicholim

KARNATAKA
1 Bandisitti
2 Belugundli
3 Haligadde
4 Hegde
5 Honavar
6 Kamalapura
7 Kharwar
8 Kudigundi
9 Kumbharakottige
10 Kumta
11 Mallavali

KERALA
1 Panjala
2 Pullikurchi

TAMIL NADU
1 Cholavalli
2 Elumedu
3 Gudithangichavadi
4 Konairikuppam
5 Kurjipaddi
6 Nathapatha
7 Nellikuppam
8 Panruti
9 Pattiamdikampatti
10 Puddukottai
11 Semakottai
12 Thondamanatham
13 Vadakalpattu
14 Vandipalliam
15 Velangambadi
16 Yarlandakullam

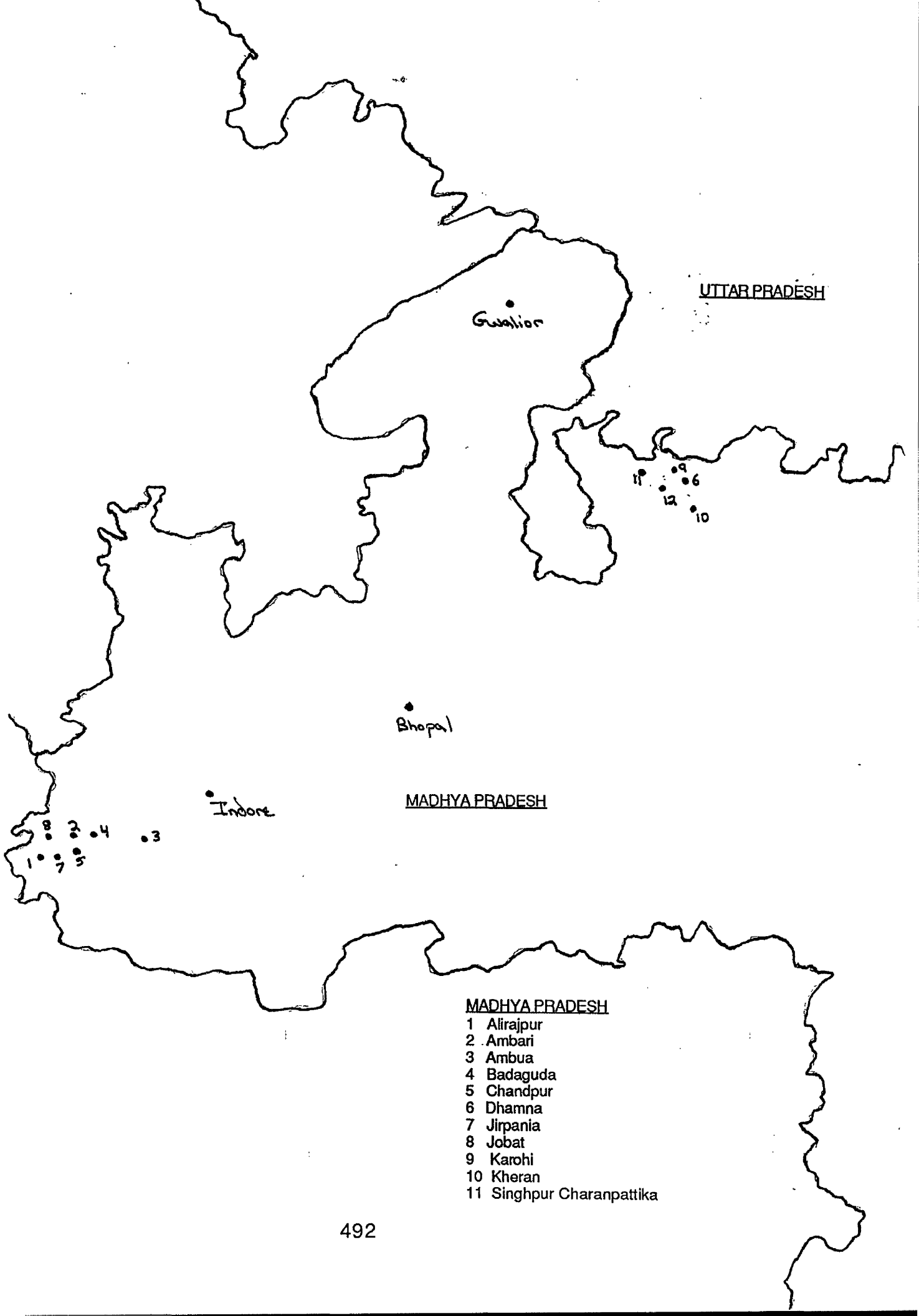


GUJARAT
1 Ambala
2 Bhuj
3 Chota Udaipur
4 Deohati
5 Jaban
6 Jamburi
7 Jenhre
8 Sihod

MAHARASHTRA
1 Paithan
2 Shukrawar

RAJASTHAN
1 Gogadev
2 Mandawa
3 Molela
4 Nawalgarh

HARYANA
1 Jind

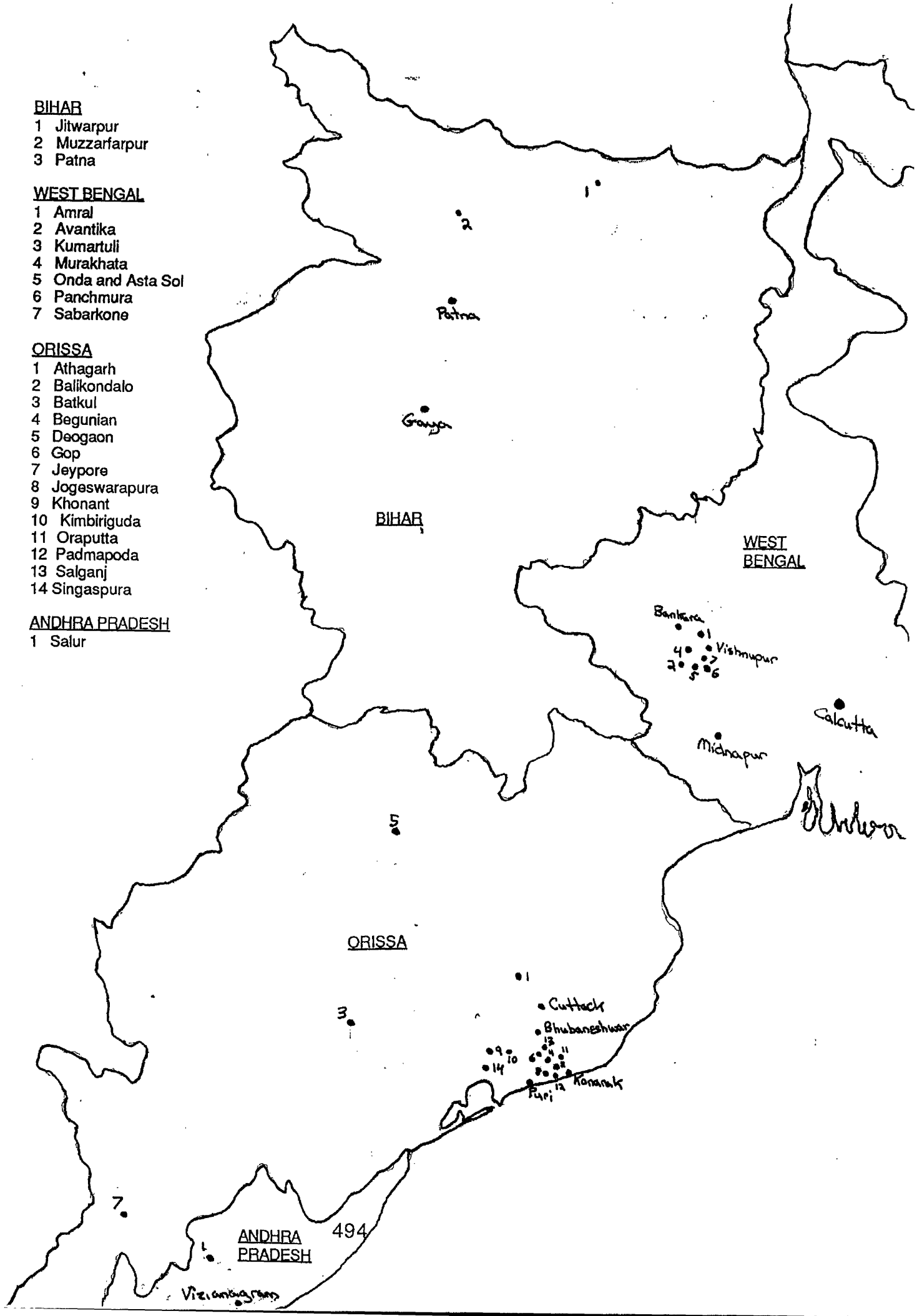


MADHYA PRADESH

1 Alirajpur
2 Ambari
3 Ambua
4 Badaguda
5 Chandpur
6 Dhamna
7 Jirpania
8 Jobat
9 Karohi
10 Kheran
11 Singhpur Charanpattika

UTTAR PRADESH

1 Banwari Tola
2 Bistauli
3 Bhitauli
4 Chhatiram
5 Chowri Sathawa
6 Garaura Bazar
7 Gorakhpur
8 Gorikud
9 Khura
10 Kushinagarh
11 Madhavapur
12 Mazgaonwa
13 Mirjamalpur
14 Mundera
15 Nauranga
16 Orwalia
17 Poonda Negala
18 Shamdeoria
19 Tiwain
20 Vikrampur


BIHAR
1 Jitwarpur
2 Muzzarfarpur
3 Patna
WEST BENGAL
1 Amral
2 Avantika
3 Kumartuli
4 Murakhata
5 Onda and Asta Sol
6 Panchmura
7 Sabarkone
ORISSA
1 Athagarh
2 Balikondalo
3 Batkul
4 Begunian
5 Deogaon
6 Gop
7 Jeypore
8 Jogeswarapura
9 Khonant
10 Kimbiriguda
11 Oraputta
12 Padmapoda
13 Salganj
14 Singaspura
ANDHRA PRADESH
1 Salur
Patna
Ganga
BIHAR
WEST BENGAL
Bankura
Vishnupur
Calcutta
Midnapur
ORISSA
Cuttack
Bhubaneshwar
Puri
Konarak
ANDHRA PRADESH
Vizianagram

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